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Fostering Open Government in the Arab Region

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Fostering Open Government in the Arab Region

Within the framework of ESCWA project entitled “Institutional development to strengthen the delivery of government services towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Western Asia”



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This study was prepared based on modern literary references in the area of governance, the open government and the role of technology in developing the governmental work and promoting transparency, accountability and participatory. The study also relied on responses from ESCWA member States to the open government questionnaire in 2017. The study was presented at the Experts Meeting “Open government and emerging technologies in the Arab Region”, held in 2017, with the participation of experts and representatives of Governments and non-governmental organisations in the Arab countries. A number of governmental experts sent their observations on the study after this meeting, all of which were taken into consideration.

This study was prepared by Dr. Mohamed Bachir Mounajed, former Minister of Telecommunications and Technology of the Syrian Arab Republic, who has long experience in information and communication technology policies and policies for enhancing government and administrative work relying on technology.

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Ms. Lize Denner of the Innovation Section participated in the preparation of this study, prepared the first part of the study on the concepts, models and some case studies in English. Ms. Hania Sabbidin Dimassi also participated in the preparation of some case studies from the Arab region and contributed to the revision of the study. Engineer Mohammad Nahar participated in preparing this summary of the original study.

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Introduction

This report is a summary of the study “Fostering open government in the Arab region”, a study prepared within the framework of the ESCWA project funded by the United Nations Development Account entitled “Institutional development for better service delivery towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals in Western Asia”.¹ The implementation of this project started in the second half of 2016 aimed at building the capacity of ESCWA Member States to promote transparency and accountability in governments by adopting a participatory approach to governance. The project is jointly implemented by the Technology for Development Division, the Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division and the Social Development Division at ESCWA. The project is in direct support of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. The project is also linked to Goal 17 on mechanisms for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to the use of technology.

This report aims to raise awareness, develop a common understanding, provide a policy framework for open government with emphasis on the use of technology in developing strong public institutions, promote public sector accountability, transparency and responsiveness, as well as incentivize e-participation and engagement of citizens; and thus, promote open government in the Arab region. The study also shows the status of open government in the Arab region based on the results of the ESCWA questionnaire on open government, as well as on some international, regional and national references on e-government and open government.

This report provides a policy framework for the implementation of open government in the Arab countries and is intended to be a model guide to develop a national action plan for the implementation of open government programmes in government departments and institutions, in a logical sequence, containing consecutive stages. The framework sets out the legislative, procedural and technological requirements for each stage.

This summary contains three parts:

- (a) Part I shows a summary of international concepts and models on open government, as well as international and Arab case studies;
- (b) Part II is dedicated to describing the situation of open government in the Arab States;
- (c) Part III is intended to display the proposed policy framework for the Arab States to shift towards open government; it also shows the necessary laws and legislation for that.

PART I

OPEN GOVERNMENT CONCEPTS, MODELS AND INTERNATIONAL AND ARAB SUCCESS STORIES

1. OPEN GOVERNMENT CONCEPTS AND MODELS

A. INTRODUCTION

Today the social, economic and environmental challenges facing societies around the world are becoming increasingly acute, to the extent that they hinder efforts towards sustainable and inclusive development for all and in many countries. In this context, the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 adopted Resolution 70/1 entitled “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which aims to address those challenges by promoting sustainable and inclusive development for all.²

This agenda showed that establishing good governance at all levels, and developing transparent, effective and accountable institutions are requirements to build peaceful societies and achieve sustainable development. The Agenda provides for specific measures to reach this desired situation, particularly in Goal 16 and under this goal promotes the “development of effective, transparent and accountable institutions at all levels” (16.6); “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels” (16.7) and “ensure public access to information” (16.10).³ In order to achieve these objectives, it will be necessary to build a partnership between the government, the private sector, civil society/NGOs and other stakeholders (such as the general public, international, regional and sub regional institutions/organizations).

Overcoming challenges that face communities require building strong public institutions that can provide decisions, plans, policies, strategies and programmes needed to develop and implement the necessary solutions to achieve sustainable development. Optimal governance and better public institutions are key elements in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Corrupt and weak public institutions cannot develop and implement effective measures to achieve the objectives related to economic development, poverty reduction, social welfare and climate change. The weaker the public institutions are, the greater the likelihood of the political turmoil which may eventually lead to violence and conflict, and subsequently affect other aspects of development in the country.

However, the responsibility for the achievement of sustainable development rests not only on the government but must also be shared among all, i.e. on society as a whole. The private sector, civil society/NGOs and the general public cannot wait for the government to deal with these challenges alone, but they would have, being a part of society and concerned with the challenges confronting it, to actively participate in the search for appropriate solutions and operationalise them.⁴ It is, therefore, necessary today to proceed with the establishment of open governments, which allow for a two-way free flow of information and knowledge with enhanced cooperation and shared responsibility. The benefit of this open partnership is not only to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in a better manner but also extends to build equal and inclusive societies that are better equipped to deal with future developments.

Today, the positive impact of technology on service delivery and its potential in strengthening governance and improving the relationship between the government and the community it serves has become clear. Technology allows for the openness of governments making them close to all members of society in all geographical regions due to the two-way communication and cooperation. For this reason, technology has played a central role in the implementation of open government initiatives and in the building of strong, transparent and accountable public institutions that serve citizens and promote their active participation in finding appropriate solutions to sustainable development.

B. UNDERSTAND OPEN GOVERNMENT

1. *Dimensions of governance*

Governance is a complex term that has no standard definition but derives its meaning from the context in which it is used; governance can be described as an action, structure, mechanism and strategy. There are

various types of governance, such as political, public, social, or economic governance. In this study, governance is understood in the context of a procedure associated with those who hold power to make decisions and implement actions to manage the affairs of the country.⁵ Good governance calls for public institutions to provide better services to society and the general public. This trend is linked to the awakening of informed citizens who clearly articulate their needs and requirements to the Government.⁶

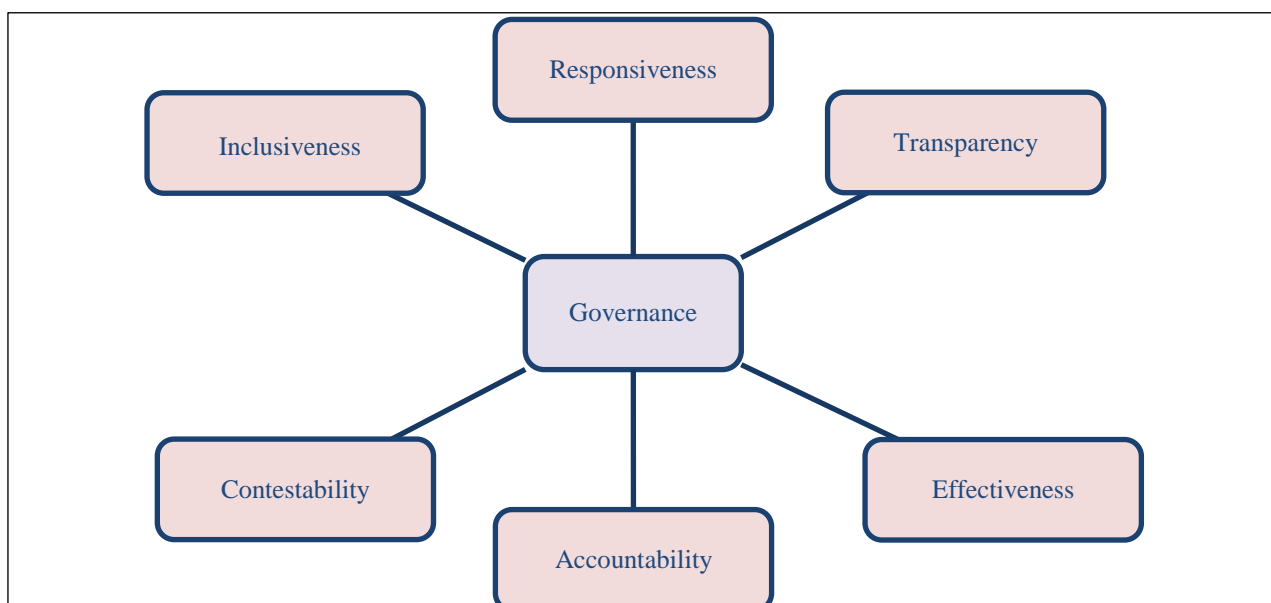
In 2014, ESCWA conducted a study on governance and its different dimensions, after consulting with all stakeholders on the ideal goals to be achieved by the Government and has concluded that there are five dimensions usually associated with this concept, which together constitute a benchmark for governance. These five dimensions are accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, effectiveness and contestability.⁷

Accountability is a complex issue; it is linked to the norms, standards and mechanisms in place to ensure that governments bear responsibility for their decisions and actions. This concept includes two specific features: the first is the obligation imposed on public institutions to provide information to the public on their decisions and actions; the second is the capacity of the public or the competent supervisory bodies to intervene in order to correct these decisions or act when they do not fall within the competence of those institutions. Transparency is associated with providing useful tools to ensure effective and timely access to information on the functions and work of the Government, as well as public complaints and objections, and standards of integrity.⁸

Inclusiveness is defined by two key components: equal participation and equal treatment. Equal participation ensures that all citizens have the right to express their views and needs on public policy and activities concerning the relationship between the citizen and the Government, which also helps strengthening accountability. Equal treatment guarantees that all citizens, regardless of their status, have the same rights and equal opportunities to exercise these rights. Effectiveness is determined by an analysis of existing tools and possibilities with regard to planning and financial management, service delivery and response to the concerns of civil society/NGOs. Contestability means allowing all citizens to intervene in the selection of leaders, public officials, policies, service providers and products.⁹

A sixth dimension can be added to these five dimensions, namely responsiveness, indicating the obligation imposed on the Government to be responsive to citizens' needs and the planning and implementation of services, policies, strategies and programmes accordingly.

Figure 1.1 Dimensions of governance



Source: ESCWA, Arab Governance Report 2014.

2. Technology and governance

Technology has had an impact on the work of Government since its inception. With each technological revolution, the benefits to the Government work are steadily increasing. The emergence of computers has offered the Government new methods to manage its internal procedures. The development and prevalence of the internet have been the second major catalyst, with which the use of information and communications technology (ICTs) began to increase access and external accessibility to government information and services. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (DESA) explained the growing impact of ICTs on Government action by developing a multi-stage web presence model that indicates specific stages of Internet use to increase the availability of government services to the general public.¹⁰ These stages of presence are: (a) Emerging services; (b) Enhanced services; (c) Transactional services; and (d) Interrelated services.

As the potentials of information and communication technology and the technological infrastructures grew, allowing for better access (especially wireless), the types and modes of interaction between government and citizens grew in a similar fashion which led to the emergence of e-government and e-participation. E-participation allowed citizens to contribute to decision-making and policy-making, or at a minimum, provide feedback concerning these issues. Some other e-government applications remain controversial, such as electronic voting, which is supposed to allow all citizens to participate in elections via the Internet.¹¹

3. Open government

In fact, there is no single definition of open government; the meaning of this term and the related concepts associated with it are in a constant transformation with the adoption of new ideas, insights and targets. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has described the government as open when it meets three characteristics: (a) transparency; (b) accessibility; and (c) responsiveness.¹²

The “Open Government Partnership” envisages the presence of transparent, accountable and responsive Governments better than they are at present and more sustainable with the ultimate objective of enhancing the quality of government and its services. Achieving this requires changes in current culture, values and standards to ensure effective and efficient cooperation and dialogue between the public and the Government.¹³ In the scope of the Rule of Law Index, developed by the “World Justice Project”, open government is defined as a Government that shares information, fosters the participation of citizens in public policy deliberations, and provides people with tools to hold the Government accountable.¹⁴

The term ‘open government’ is subject to the impact of what Governments want to achieve such as in accessing data and information, providing online services, engaging citizens in decision-making and designing services; however, improving participation, transparency and accountability remain the main goals of open government, regardless of the definition. There is also a close link between the concepts of public governance and open government, given that the second concept is based on the same principles that inspire governance.¹⁵

C. MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

Shifting toward an open government entails a number of decisions, legislation and administrative, legislative, regulatory, institutional and technological procedures. These amendments affect both the various actors in the Government and the Government’s interaction with the citizens and all stakeholders in society. Given the complexity of this process, a number of authors and researchers have developed models and frameworks that can help Governments reach a better implementation of open government. ESCWA has investigated four models in its study based on the criteria of focus, purpose and the possibilities to contribute to the implementation of open government in the Arab region; these models are:

1. *Open Government Implementation Model (OGIM)*¹⁶

Professors Lee and Kwak (2011) presented a model for the implementation of open government, which focuses on the successful use of social media and other Web 2.0 tools in enhancing the contribution of citizen engagement. It is a model based on a logical sequence of four stages that all government agencies can follow, at all levels, to implement open government initiatives. These four stages are: increasing data transparency; improving open participation; enhancing open collaboration and realizing full engagement. Each of the implementation stages has a focus area, deliverables, expected advantages and challenges, best practices, and performance metrics for each stage.

2. *The “Loch Ness” Model*¹⁷

This model is a framework developed by Gigler and others (2014) to analyse the conditions that allow the public to take advantage of information and communications technologies in government accountability, enhance their access to public services, and improve their well-being in general. The framework consists of two components, namely government models and contextual and enabling ICT factors. Effective implementation presumably leads to specific outputs related to the development of decision-making processes, the formulation of more inclusive public policies, increased access to and quality of public services, policy reforms and institutional structures, and improved human well-being.

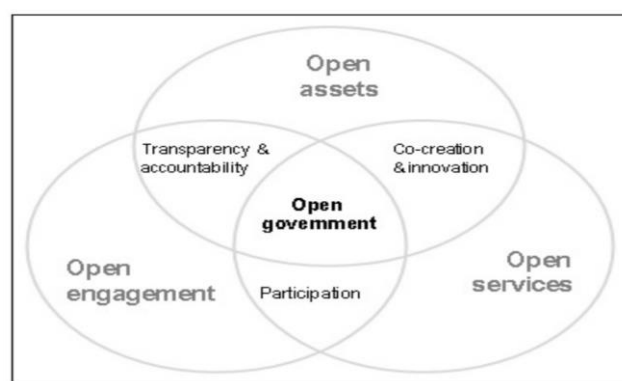
3. *New Public Service (NPS)*¹⁸

The New Public Service model, developed by Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), champions a view that public managers, when exercising government administration and applying its policies, are responsible for serving and empowering citizens. This can be achieved by adopting seven principles that govern the exercise of responsibilities in public administration: “serve rather than steer”, “seek the public interest, not a secondary outcome”, “think strategically, act democratically”, “serve citizens, not customers”, “recognize that accountability is not simple”, “value people, not just productivity”, and “value citizenship over entrepreneurship”. This model has been proposed as a substitute for the new public administration which calls for the application of business approaches in government governance.

4. *Open Governance System*¹⁹

Millard (2015) developed an Open Governance System to show that open government is the next step in the public-sector development process and that the success of this step depends on being part of a broader system of the Open Governance System, spanning across different levels of the public sector to non-governmental actors. (figure 1.2). This model is intended to promote cooperation to raise the level of coordination between government assets and outside the government assets. The Open Governance System includes, in a broad sense, open structures, open organisations and open procedures, seeking to reach better cooperation between “Islands” within the government and among its various components at different levels. Information and communications technology are considered a fundamental tool to operationalise an Open Governance System.

Figure 1.2 Open Governance System – Doing more with more



Source: Millard, 2015, p. 5.

D. CASE STUDIES OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

States have undertaken various initiatives to improve national governance with regard to accountability and transparency. In formulating the open government concept, associated with the new potentialities offered by technology, such initiatives could only increase. The need to better governance, capable of responding to challenges in the world, has led to the establishment of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2011; the purpose of this international multi-stakeholders' partnership was to assist Governments to work better and renew public confidence in public institutions by making Governments more open and responsive, and therefore more transparent and accountable.²⁰

The basic study included successful initiatives in the open government and its implementation in several countries, with the aim to adopt from them in the countries of the Arab region. Three initiatives were selected from different countries. The first was on Sweden, a European country that occupies an advanced place in the global open governments' indices; the second on the United States of America, and the third on Indonesia, a developing nation that has made remarkable progress in East Asia and the Pacific. The study also included a description of successful Arab initiatives in the open government in Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco. The table below briefly summarises those case studies; full details are available in the original study.

Case studies on open government from outside the Arab region					
	Civic engagement index	The right to access information	Complaints' mechanisms for open government	Publication of laws and government data	Open government index 2018
Sweden	0.87	0.95	0.81	0.79	Ranked fourth globally
United States	0.80	0.71	0.79	0.77	Ranked 13 globally
Indonesia	0.62	0.58	0.57	0.36	Ranked 47 globally

Case studies on open government in the Arab region						
	Open Government Partnership	Open government legislations	E-Government Development Index 2016	E-participation index 2016	Open Government Index 2018	Others
Jordan	Joined in 2011	Access to Information Law No. 47 in 2007	Ranked 91/193	Ranked tenth Arab and 100 globally	Ranked 79 globally	Preparation of three national plans for Open Government Partnership, the latest being the third plan for the period 2016-2018
Tunisia	Joined in 2014	Basic Law No. 22 of 2016 on access to information	Ranked 72/193	Fifth Arab, 43 globally	Ranked 57 globally	Preparation of two national action plans for the Open Government Partnership for the two periods 2014-2016 and 2016-2018

Case studies on open government in the Arab region						
	Open Government Partnership	Open government legislations	E-Government Development Index 2016	E-participation index 2016	Open Government Index 2018	Others
Morocco	Joined in 2018	Law 31.13 on the right to access information	Ranked 85/193	First Arab, 17 globally	Ranked 84 globally	The Moroccan Government has set out a programme of action comprising a set of pledges and has made a significant effort in revising the legal and institutional framework concerning aspects of the open government

PART II

**THE STATUS OF OPEN GOVERNMENT
IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES**

2. THE STATUS OF COMPONENTS OF OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

A. INTRODUCTION

Many developed countries have made considerable strides in their quest to become more open. However, developing countries have been less enthusiastic toward openness, with a few exceptions such as Chile and Uruguay. The countries of northern Europe dominate the first five places in most specific performance indicators for open government while the other developed countries occupy the next 15 places in line.²¹

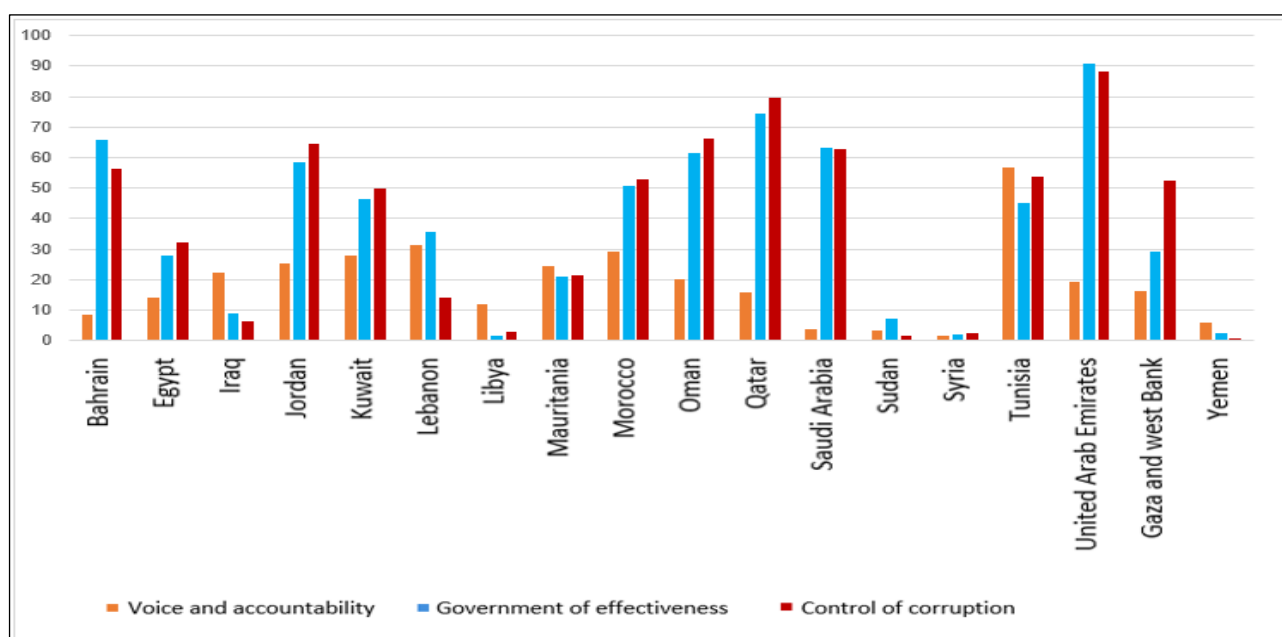
That said, many countries in the Arab region have become aware of the importance of moving toward consolidating the concepts of open government and have then taken multiple steps towards laying the foundations necessary for this. The successful implementation of e-government in many of them was an entry point towards the application of the concepts of open government. Efforts in the area of open government in the Arab region have focused on initiatives relevant to open government data. In 2015, ten ESCWA member States (which are States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) developed and implemented initiatives in the area of open data; nonetheless, the level of implementation, jobs, services, and available data, differed among those States.

B. GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ITS LINKAGE TO OPEN GOVERNMENT AND E-GOVERNMENT

1. Governance in the Arab region

Intending to draw the basic scene of governance in the Arab region, we present in figure 2.1 some available and specific data for governance in the Arab region. The figure presented focuses on some indicators denoting the dimensions of governance, namely, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. The percentile ranking of Arab countries in the field of “Voice and accountability” was generally below 60.²² Tunisia received the highest value in 2017, amounting to 56.6, followed by Lebanon with a value of 31.5. This index is one of the key governance indicators (and open government) because it sheds light on the views held on the ability of citizens to choose their Government, as well as on their enjoyment of freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of information.

Figure 2.1 Governance in the Arab region 2017



Source: World Bank, ©2017. Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Data also indicate that government accountability remains weak in the region, due to limited checks and balances and because government executive officers dominate the public discourse and policymaking. The reform process of the public sector has so far been fragmented and lacks comprehensive strategies. The Government's inability to be responsive to the needs of citizens has led to increased risk exposure. The countries of the region today have to face the challenges in the area of governance and engage all in decision-making and planning in order to build an enabling environment supportive of sustainable development.

2. Open government and e-government

Despite the discrepancy between the objectives of open government and e-government, it is clear there is a common intersection in the methodology and data between them. E-government raises the level of interaction between the Government and the stakeholders, whether individuals or groups, enabling stakeholders to obtain services they desire in a better way. Effective e-government also facilitates citizen-participation and openness which are among the most important objectives of an open government.

Most countries in the Arab region have made significant strides in the implementation of e-government, and some of them have achieved tangible success. Perhaps the success of these States in applying e-government is an essential factor in alerting them to the importance of open government and encouraging them to adopt some of its concepts. To examine the degree of interdependence between e-government development in the Arab region, and the characteristics of good governance (which are from the benchmarks of the open government platforms), two indicators were selected in this study: the first is the e-Government Development Index (e-GDI),²³ and the second is the Government Effectiveness Index²⁴ to examine the interrelationships. Table 2.1 shows the values of these two indicators for some countries in the Arab region.

TABLE 2.1 GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS INDEX AND E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT INDEX IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES

Country	Government Effectiveness Index	E-Government Development Index
Jordan	0.62	0.5123
United Arab Emirates	0.84	0.7515
Bahrain	0.63	0.7734
Tunisia	0.56	0.5682
Syrian Arab Republic	0.02	0.3404
Sudan	0.03	0.2539
Iraq	0.07	0.3334
Oman	0.62	0.5962
Qatar	0.83	0.6699
Kuwait	0.50	0.7080
Lebanon	0.13	0.5646
Libya	0.01	0.4322
Egypt	0.31	0.4594
Morocco	0.50	0.5186
Saudi Arabia	0.60	0.6822
Yemen	0.02	0.2248

Source: United Nations e-Government Survey 2016 and World Bank. 2016; Worldwide Governance Indicators.

The linear correlation coefficient between these two indices in the Arab countries shown in the table above was calculated at a value of 0.848, which indicates a significant correlation between the two indices. Thus, confirming a clear correlation between e-government development in the Arab region and the government effectiveness which opens the door to the implementation of open government.

C. STATUS OF COMPONENTS OF OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

In the absence of accurate and comprehensive indicators and data on open government in the Arab region, ESCWA study presented some of the indicators associated with the supporting means and components (building blocks) for the establishment of open government such as the widespread use of ICTs, being the basic tool for openness, interaction and cooperation between Governments and citizens; access to information, data and digital content; and the level of development and participatory electronic services. In this context, the comprehensive study discussed the Internet and mobile services penetration rates and the international bandwidth offer in the Arab States, and also examined the impact of ICT on access to basic services and network readiness index in the region, and presented the e-participation index and the ranking of the Arab States globally in this indicator.²⁵

The average of internet penetration rates of all the Arab countries, according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), is 41.8, which is still below the global average (45.9). However, mobile phone penetration rates exceeded the world average in 12 Arab countries. Noting that the regional average of mobile phone penetration is 107.1 in 2016, which is higher than the global average (101.5).

Some Arab countries spare no efforts to improve networked readiness despite political turmoil and restrictions on certain types of information. According to the World Economic Forum's Readiness Index on the readiness of countries to take advantage of the opportunities offered by ICT to enhance their competitiveness, a number of Arab countries have improved their readiness in 2016 compared to 2015, such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Algeria and Mauritania; while the rank of other countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan and Egypt declined.

Although the severe crises experienced by some Arab countries for years, such as the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, some of them made significant progress in ranking on the e-participation index. The Syrian Arab Republic jumped 66 positions in this index in 2016, moving from the 164th place in 2014 to 98th. Iraq also jumped 48 positions from 152th in 2014 to 104th in 2016.

D. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR MEASURING OPEN GOVERNMENT

Assessing the status of a state in terms of its progress in the area of open government and comparing it with other countries necessitates assessment criteria and quantitative measurement indicators to determine the level of progress in each of the key features of the open government in that country. Notable among these efforts is the publication of social statistics groups entitled "Government at a glance vision 2013", by the OECD and the work of the World Justice Program team, where they prepared the Guide for the Global Justice Project of open government (World Justice Program Team).^{26,27,28} The Guide included six Arab countries: Tunisia, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. Table 2.2 shows the scores and rankings of each of the six Arab States out of the 102 contained in the Guide.

TABLE 2.2 RANKING OF SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES ON THE OPEN GOVERNMENT INDEX FOR 2015, 2018

Country	Order	Index value	Order	Index value
	2015	2015	2018	2018
Tunisia	59	0.51	57	0.50
Morocco	60	0.51	84	0.44
United Arab Emirates	69	0.48	98	0.39
Jordan	76	0.46	79	0.45
Lebanon	81	0.45	89	0.44
Egypt	91	0.42	112	0.25

Source: World Justice Project, 2018. http://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/ogi_2015.pdf.

E. ESCWA QUESTIONNAIRE ON OPEN GOVERNMENT

The questionnaire, prepared by ESCWA aimed at identifying the status of policies, strategies and legislation of open government in ESCWA member States, was addressed to ministries, government departments, public bodies, and government economic institutions, as well as other public actors concerned in the Arab countries, and to some policy and strategy workers in those States. This questionnaire consists of seven sections each revolves around an aspect of open government. These sections: are policies and strategies of open government; policies and strategies of openness and transparency, open government data, open government web portals and technologies used, open government legislation and regulations, open government use and the extent to which they can be beneficial, and finally, the challenges facing the implementation of open government. The following paragraphs outline the status of the Arab States based on the results of the ESCWA questionnaire.

1. Open government policies and strategies

All the countries of the Arab region don't have an explicit or complete open government policy or strategy, in the strict sense, but many have national plans, in whole or in part, to move towards open government or are in the process of developing plans in this regard. Arguably Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco are the countries in the region that have integrated plans that can represent a kind of a strategy for open government. The questionnaire results depict that most of the Arab States' open government-related strategies are focused on the following concepts: transparency, open government data and its administration, and modernisation of the public sector.

2. Government transparency and openness policies and strategies

Most of the Arab States participating in the ESCWA questionnaire replied that they had, in one way or another, a transparency strategy or were in the process of preparing such a strategy. Some of these States have identified the general objectives of this strategy in accordance with table 2.3.

TABLE 2.3 THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY FOR TRANSPARENCY IN THE ARAB REGION

Objectives \ Countries	Jordan	United Arab Emirates	Bahrain	Tunisia	Oman	State of Palestine	Kuwait	Lebanon	Egypt	Morocco	Mauritania	Saudi Arabia
Instilling a culture of openness												
Support the principle of transparency												
Better governance and management												
A promising and growing economy and a better life												
Administrative reform and administrative development												
Developing and improving quality of public services												

TABLE 2.3 (continued)

Objectives \ Countries	Jordan	United Arab Emirates	Bahrain	Tunisia	Oman	State of Palestine	Kuwait	Lebanon	Egypt	Morocco	Mauritania	Saudi Arabia
Expand private sector participation												
Combating corruption												
Promoting participatory democracy												
Establishing a digital infrastructure (data management system)												
Regional and international openness												
Confidence-building												

3. Open government data and their features

The countries of the Arab region were not immune to recognize the importance of open data and their positive impact. The majority of them, to varying degrees, launched projects and initiatives to make official public information available to all as part of the framework of the implementation of e-government programmes. Table 2.4 lists the government data dissemination/publication initiatives in selected Arab countries, mostly under the framework of e-government.

TABLE 2.4 LIST OF OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA INITIATIVES IN SELECTED ARAB COUNTRIES

County	Initiative/website
Jordan	Open government data platform https://data.jordan.gov.jo
United Arab Emirates	Official data portal of the Government Bayanat.ae
Bahrain	Bahrain open data portal www.data.gov.bh/
Tunisia	Open data portal www.data.gov.tn
Saudi Arabia	Saudi open data data.gov.sa
Oman	National open data initiative www.oman.om/opendata
Qatar	Qatar Information Exchange Project (Qalm) www.gov.qa/wps/portal/opendata
Morocco	Morocco Data Portal data.gov.ma

Source: Compiled by ESCWA based on Arab countries' responses to a survey on open government.

TABLE 2.5 OPEN DATA BAROMETER INDICATOR IN A NUMBER OF ARAB STATES

Country	Open data barometer indicator for 2016	Global ranking	Sub-Indicators			Score change	
			Readiness	Implementation	Score trend	Compared to 2015	Maturity ranking
Tunisia	32.17	50	45	32	22	-11	Emerging and in progress initiatives
United Arab Emirates	26.17	59	47	23	12	-12	Unilateral initiatives
Qatar	19.26	74	41	18	2	-14	Unilateral initiatives
Bahrain	18.91	74	33	20	7	-17	Unilateral initiatives
Saudi Arabia	18.66	74	37	15	12	-17	Unilateral initiatives
Morocco	16.86	79	38	12	7	-17	Emerging and in progress initiatives
Egypt	13.89	85	27	14	6	-10	Limited capacity initiatives
Jordan	12.58	87	28	11	6	-17	Limited capacity initiatives
State of Palestine	8.24	100	23	7	2
Lebanon	5.82	104	17	7	0
Yemen	0	114	0	6	0	-23	Limited capacity initiatives

Source: ESCWA, based on the World Wide Web Foundation. Open Data Barometer Global Report Third Edition. May 2017.

Table 2.5 presents the status of open data in 11 Arab countries included in the Open Data Barometer Global Report of 2017. This report classified these initiatives at the global level in four clusters according to maturity levels: initiatives with limited capabilities, unilateral initiatives, emerging initiatives in progress, and initiatives with great potential.

4. Open Data Portals

All Arab countries except Lebanon, the State of Palestine and Mauritania have open data portals, and the data items available on the government portals primarily contain information on the economy, finance, health, education and transport and roads, justice and crime. Open data portals are financed, in the vast majority of these countries, by the Ministry responsible for the portal and, in a few cases, are funded by international organizations. As for the management of these portals and authorities responsible for this, they are often specialized information technology bodies (United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia) or ministries concerned with e-government (Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco).

Of the significant challenges that face the countries regarding open data portals is to ensure the quality of data published in them and how to achieve it. The results of the ESCWA questionnaire indicated that Bahrain

applies international standards, while noting that Morocco periodically reviews data, and Tunisia relies on local standards to ensure data quality.

5. *Legislation and regulations of Open Government*

The success of any open government project requires the existence of an appropriate legislative framework to enhance the implementation of the project. The existence of legislation or regulations relating to a legal definition of and access to open data obliging the public agencies to publish government documents and determine how they are disseminated and the nature of their data is essential for any open data strategy. Legislation or regulations related to the availability, acquisition and use of technology and the ensuing privacy and information security laws are also necessary. Similarly, specific legislation on public participation in decision-making helps to spread participation. The Law on access to information is considered the basis of open government legislation, and some Arab countries have enacted legislation to address the issue of the right to access to information (table 2.6), while efforts are under way in other countries to develop similar legislation.

TABLE 2.6 THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION LAW IN SOME ARAB STATES

Country	The right of access to Information Law
Jordan	Law No. 47 of 2007
Tunisia	Basic Law No. 22 of 2016 dated 24 March 2016
Yemen	Law No. 13 of 2012
Lebanon	Law adopted by the Lebanese Parliament on 19 January 2017
Morocco	Act 31.13 of 2018

Certain other Arab countries have recognised the importance of the legislative framework and worked on the promulgation of some necessary legislation. Some countries have articles enshrined in constitutions such as Egypt, or have draft laws on the right to access information such as the State of Palestine, or have issued a decree such as Royal Decree No. 40/2014 of Oman regarding open data.

6. *Challenges facing the implementation of open government*

The application of open government faces multiple challenges that can be classified by nature in the following groups:²⁹

- (a) Challenges related to open government policies and encompasses a range of problems, mainly:
 - Lack of a model or reference framework for open government;
 - Lack of a consolidated and effective inventory of government data.
- (b) Challenges of a technological nature and including a set of problems, mainly:
 - Limited access to and use of government data;
 - Shortcomings in the completeness, accuracy, quality and timeliness of government data.
- (c) Challenges of an organisational and institutional nature. involves a range of problems, mainly:
 - Lack of suitably qualified government's human resources;
 - Lack of correlation and integration of data among different government departments;

- Insufficient operating procedures in the public sector to collect, integrate, verify, validate, disseminate, update, and promote the use of data;
 - Lack of incentives for public bodies to publish their data and share them with other public bodies.
- (d) Challenges of cultural nature, encompass a set of problems mainly:
- Insufficient citizen skills to provide access to open government services;
 - Insufficient awareness and preparedness in open government among public officials, business sector and civil society organisations.
- (e) Challenges of legal nature, encompass a set of problems mainly:
- Inadequacy of the legislative framework for the proceedings to access and use government data and information;
 - Lack of necessary regulations to implement the legislation of the open government.
- (f) Challenges related to the financing of the open government and include a range of problems, mainly:
- Lack of the necessary budgets for the implementation of open government and/or the effectiveness of the monitoring procedures of these budgets;
 - Shortage of approaches taken by government departments to assess the costs and benefits of disseminating government data;
 - High human resource costs required to implement open government and to disseminate and update government data.

F. CONCLUSION

The countries of the Arab region have tried to keep pace with the development of open government at the global level with varying degrees of success. Few of them have succeeded in developing integrated plans that would amount to open government strategies, such as Tunisia, Bahrain Jordan and Morocco, which qualified Tunisia and Jordan to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP). However, some have failed to achieve tangible progress towards the application of open government aspects.

Five Arab countries have managed to advance in their rankings globally in terms of e-participation to join the list of the top 50 countries in this field, namely Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. Several of the Arab countries, which have been experiencing acute crises for some years, such as the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Yemen have achieved unexpected progress in their rankings despite these crises.

On the other hand, it has become evident that states that have succeeded in implementing e-government and making real use of it have managed to achieve greater development towards open government. Highlighting the link between ICTs in general and e-government, in particular, on the one hand, and the open government on the other.

Regarding legislation, only five Arab countries passed laws concerning access to information, the most recent being Morocco in 2018. Various countries have promulgated different legislation on other aspects of open government, such as transparency, open data and the promotion of integrity and financial transparency. Although, many drafts of similar legislation are pending adoption, the implementation of open government faces a number of significant challenges, including political, organisational, technological, cultural, funding and legal challenges.

PART III

**OPEN GOVERNMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK
FOR ARAB COUNTRIES**

3. A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT IN ARAB COUNTRIES

In this chapter, we propose a framework for the phased implementation of open government, derived from a set of specific models published in the literature, a summary of which is presented in the first part of this study, in particular, the “Open Government Model” and “The Loch Ness Model”.^{30,31} We also note that some of the operational procedures proposed at the phases of this framework are adapted from the implementation mechanisms of the “Open Government Implementation model” developed by the “Centre for Public Administration Research”, in Austria, in collaboration with the City of Vienna.³²

In designing this framework, the status of the Arab countries and their readiness to move towards an open government in all respects have been considered as well as success stories in Arab countries, and others from developed or developing countries similar to those in the region.

By proposing this framework, ESCWA aims to galvanise Arab countries to increase the transparency of Arab governments, improve accountability and responsiveness and promote participation in Arab societies, particularly between governments and citizens. These objectives intersect with Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals specifically with targets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10.

It should be noted that open government helps to achieve all other Sustainable Development Goals.³³ For example, it helps to accelerate efforts to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) by making institutions more transparent and effective, contribute to giving citizens a role in ensuring the disbursement of public funds, and also assists in fostering innovation (SDG 9), given that open science and innovation policies enable enhanced cooperation in scientific research. Open data promotes innovation, finds solutions and new applications that depend on the availability of government data, these applications can be designed and implemented by entrepreneurs which help them establish new institutions and eventually create new employment opportunities and contribute to combating poverty (SDG 1).

A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OPEN GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK

The proposed open government implementation framework is intended to be a model guide that can be used in government departments and institutions in Arab countries to develop a national action plan for the implementation of open government programmes in a logical sequence, with successive, but overlapping phases, and determines the requirements for each of the phases with regard to focus area, supporting technology, operational procedures and measuring indicators.³⁴

The framework was developed focusing on the following requirements:

- (a) Should be derived from the best global practices;
- (b) Should be realistic and simple, so that easily applied action plans can be developed;
- (c) Should be clearly linked to the adopted e-Government activities or are under development in government departments;
- (d) Should allow effortless use of available ICTs, particularly known social media and web technologies, “Web 2.0”;
- (e) Should be adaptable, based on stages; could be more widely applied in two dimensions:
 - (i) “Vertical” execution, i.e., Sequential implementation of the different stages, with possible overlap between the different phases in some cases, depending on the level of achievement in each department or institution;

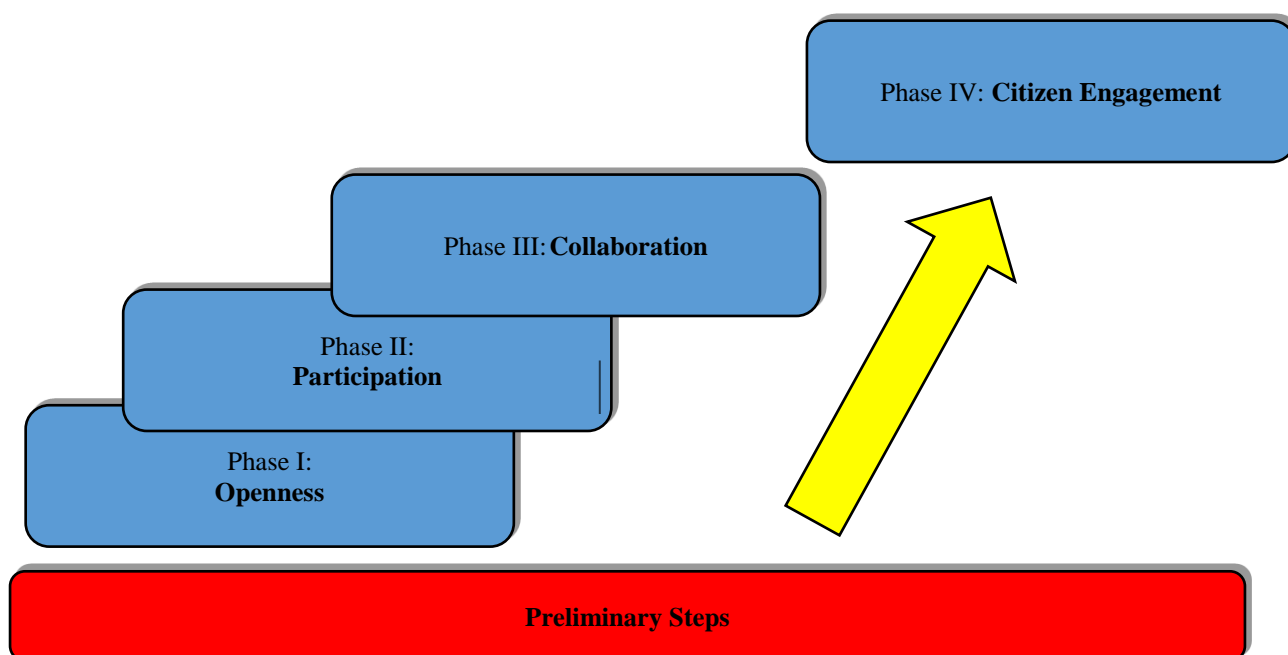
- (ii) “Horizontal” execution, i.e. applicable to specific departments and later expanded to other departments, as well as its possible implementation at central government or local governments levels.

(f) Should be linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Figure 3.1 shows an illustration of this model, which consists of four stages: (a) Openness; (b) Participation; (c) Collaboration; and (d) Citizen Engagement.

We point out that this framework presupposes, in principle, that the sequence of implementation stages should be respected as far as possible, leading towards the ultimate goal, namely citizens’ full engagement, that is why it is placed separately in figure 3.1. The addition of openness (phase I), in particular, is considered a prerequisite for implementing the following stages. Similarly, the relevant government departments will be in a better position to strengthen cooperation (phase III) and achieve citizens engagement (phase IV) after improving participation (phase II). Should the departments wish to work on many phases in parallel, they need to be mindful of the challenges related to providing resources, training and preparing human resources, time and technology, as well as resistance to change and legislative work. Working in sequence, however, helps to focus on a single phase at a time which is building the necessary capacity for the open government without overburdening the government’s workers and citizens, and contributes to increasing citizen’s engagement and openness in government work, thereby increasing the return value for both the citizens and the government. The technological and administrative complexity of open government initiatives increase at every phase, so the executing government departments should expect to face greater challenges and risks in the subsequent phases. These phases will be explained respectively after first presenting the preliminary steps to be taken before launching the open government initiatives and programmes.

Figure 3.1 Open Government Framework for the Arab region



B. PRELIMINARY STEPS

1. *Link to e-government initiatives*

Before open government, most countries in the world took various actions to improve the performance of Governments, which often lie in the overall context of e-government initiatives. These actions could be

considered as the basis upon which open government applications are built, providing a kind of continuity and harmony between e-government and open government activities.

However, if we return to the model of “web presence” developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (DESA), many developing countries are still in the early phases, and many government departments in those countries continue to focus on disseminating information to citizens based on traditional/“one-way” technologies, such as websites that lack effective communication capabilities provided by social media and Web 2.0 tools. This situation renders the citizen, in the real sense, uninvolved in the data and activities of those departments, especially since such data in this case would be initially limited in size. Additionally, there are no effective tools to enable an assessment of the extent of real participation available to users, and their impact on the government competency and citizens’ lives.

In principle, we will presume in the proposed framework that the applied e-government initiatives have permitted at a minimum the improvement of the delivery of government services, using information and communications technology, and that some measures have been taken in parallel to re-engineer the work procedures in government administration; which is supposed to practically take it, at least, to phase II of the “web presence” model.

It must be pointed out that the open government, though technologically based on e-government, is distinguished from it by concentrating on the social, political and administrative aspects of strengthening transparency, accountability, democracy and proper governance mechanisms and citizens’ engagement in decision-making and accelerating the response to their requirements rather than focusing on the use of information and communications technology to facilitate the provision of services and conduct online government transactions on the network, which remains the primary purpose of e-government.

2. Proactive measures

Before embarking on the implementation of open government, some prior preliminary measures should be taken that allow for the preparation of the procedures involved in the various phases of the proposed framework. It must be cautioned here that these measures are “preliminary” in the sense that thinking about them and initiating them should precede the launching of the implementation phases of open government, but they are in fact ongoing processes that may accompany all phases of implementation, not just a procedure taken once.

It should be noted that it is useful to conduct a survey to ascertain the readiness of the country (or organization) to shift towards open government from the legislative, regulatory, human and technological aspects, in order to take note of the various shortcomings that must be emphasized at the different phases of the proposed framework. The ESCWA survey available at the following link can be utilized: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/open-government-emerging-technologies-arab-region-survey-en.pdf.

The most important preliminary measures can be categorised in the following areas:

(a) Raising awareness

The concept of open government remains vague in many developing countries, both to citizens or government departments themselves. For this reason, it is advisable that the Government, as a first step, prepare a “concept paper”, to explain the meaning of open government. This concept paper could go hand in hand with the preparation of explanatory documents on topics under the headings of open government and its purpose, and its relationship with the public rights and freedoms, such as the right to access information and the right of freedom of expression. These documents should be posted on the Internet on various government sites and distributed in the government centres, especially citizen service centres.

Awareness-raising campaigns should be launched to inform citizens about the “concept paper” and explain it to all social groups, including government employees. The concepts and dimensions of open government must be clarified in an understandable manner, and the multiple objectives of shifting towards an open government should indicate the benefits the citizens would receive. Awareness campaigns are primarily aimed at changing the mindset of citizens as well as government workers to maximise the benefits of the shift to open government.

The media, in their various forms, play a significant role in the awareness-raising process, for example, by holding radio or television seminars and publishing press reports and investigations on the concept and advantages of open government, as well as the citizen’s rights related to it and the national action plans and programmes designed for its implementation.

(b) *Capacity-building*

Open government requires efficient human resources not only in the technical aspects but also with regard to open government policies and procedures, openness, interaction among government officials and citizens, as well as proper career conduct. Government employees should be able to use mechanisms for data dissemination and retrieval, interpret and utilise citizens feedback to guarantee effective participation. For this reason, there must be access to continuing training programmes and involve qualified personnel, who will later be closely linked to open government technological tools, as well as timing the training to coincide with the application.

Within this context, areas of special importance for training include:

- (1) Information and communications technology, particularly data processing in its various forms and office applications;
- (2) Statistical tools;
- (3) Engineering of working procedures in institutions;
- (4) Management of participatory projects;
- (5) Change management.

(c) *Internet and information networks*

The open government uses the Internet and information networks intensively, so a clear Internet usage policy needs to be developed for government offices, particularly social media. Public officials are required, in the context of open government, to remain in constant contact with citizens; sometimes this runs counter to the restrictions established or with the “ban” policies practiced by certain administrations. A plan must, therefore, be devised to ensure the transition from a state of prevention – if any – to a situation that allows the integration of Internet services in government work; it also requires – more than ever before – the adoption of clear policies for privacy and data security, and publicly – disclosed rules to handle information networks.

It has become recognised today that ICTs has a significant role to play in increasing transparency and accountability and has demonstrated its capacity to engage civil society/NGOs because it reaches a broad audience at a relatively low cost. However, economic and social constraints often result in beneficiaries not having access to the required programmes. In the case of communications and information technology, the non-availability of connectivity, high cost, or inadequate bandwidth, are among the main barriers facing communities and citizens living in rural and remote areas, or in low socio-economic conditions, leading to injustice in sharing the benefits of technology and, therefore, without the benefit of the openness of governments.

(d) *Organisational structures*

The implementation of open government requires diligent and continuous cooperation among departments and organizational structures within each government department. For this reason, government departments do not necessarily need to create specialised sections to implement tasks relating to open government; it is advised, instead, to develop a matrix for virtual interworking, under the supervision of Senior management. Virtual interworking should comprise the different divisions involved in each department. At minimal this should include the functional structures related to information and communications services, e-government services, administrative development, legal affairs, media and public relations, as well as all functional structures responsible for releasing data. This participatory structure would be responsible for coordinating all activities of open government at the relevant government department, including technological options (e.g.: data formats), priorities for selecting and validating data, operational projects, handling and responding to citizens' feedback, monitoring and evaluation activities, and identifying the required training needs and human resources.

In addition to the cooperation within each government department, it is also necessary to regulate collaboration among different government departments. Many divergent trends could be considered for coordination and organization at the national level. Some countries may see, for example, the establishment of a centralized institutional structure (a public body) authorized to implement open government functions; while some may only consider a higher council or senior steering committee or an independent commission; others might consider that coordination among government departments is exclusively a government function, without the need for a competent organizational structure.

(e) *Change management*

Open government requires radical changes in government administration, working procedures and even political visions. It is therefore advisable that the organisational structures, responsible for overseeing the open government in each government department or at the national level (whatever its form), plan for management change in each government department concerned with the implementation of the open government, and follow-up on its execution.

3. Designing a general framework of open government

Along with the measures to be taken before embarking on the implementation of the open government, some of which may last – as we have mentioned – even during implementation, it is important that the Government develop a declared policy document which outlines the general national framework for open government, and expresses its vision and the principles needed for the implementation and which directs decision-making process. This “policy document” varies from the “concept paper” referred to above in that the latter primarily aims at raising awareness on open government topics, while the former is considered an obligation of or a pact with the Government, under which it [the Government] undertakes to apply and sustain open government, and view it as an integrated component of its public policies.

It is important that the “policy document” refers to the applicability of the open government concepts at the local level as they apply at the national central level.

C. PHASE ONE: OPENNESS

The primary purpose of the first phase can be determined by openness to promote transparency through the following general objectives:

- (a) Focus on open data, its dissemination and quality;
- (b) Build a culture of cooperation among government agencies;
- (c) Raise public awareness about the importance of openness and the accountability of governments;
- (d) Encourage innovation and offer innovative services.

This phase is characterised by the utilisation of available technologies from information and communication technologies.

1. *Focus area*

Openness by adopting open data to enhance transparency, is the gateway to open government implementation, which represents the first phase of the open government framework, given the ease and relative speed of its completion, as well as its responsiveness to the direct needs of citizens to information. This phase, therefore, forms the cornerstone of open participation and cooperation between government, citizens and other stakeholders.

Openness and adoption of open government data means that all data in the government departments are placed at the disposal of the public, either on their initiative, for example, via a portal or website, or upon the request of one or more interested parties to government department, if the required data are not publicly available in accordance with the first case. Access to the required data is often free of charge, i.e. government administration, owner of the data, do not receive any wages or fees from citizens for receiving or using it, except the cost of processing, copying and printing the data that are not publicly available at times, which must be based on cost at a minimum extent. Legislation or regulations on the right of access to information specifies mechanisms for data dissemination or availability by the two previous cases.

Because of the high inflation in the volume of data that we are witnessing today, it is inevitable to resort at this preliminary phase to selection. Selection means to delineate data with a high-impact on citizens on the one hand and ensure the quality of such data in terms of accuracy, consistency and timeliness (i.e. in the appropriate period) on the other.

Government departments at this first phase should not seek to disseminate all the data in their possession since it would not be feasible, and would not be too – and more importantly – effective. However, attention to data quality must occupy a key place at this phase, as dissemination of unreliable data would mislead the citizen and can lead to a lack of understanding of the government work. After disseminating data, correcting or withdrawing it from circulation, if they do not match the requirements of quality, will be extremely difficult and will damage the reputation of the institution and shake the confidence of the citizen in it. For this reason, administrations should ensure that data are not made publicly available unless their validity and accuracy are confirmed.

Data owned by government departments is indeed a valuable national resource that could be used to improve citizen understanding of what the Government is doing, assess its efficient performance and the extent to which it assumes its responsibilities; whereas, the dissemination and sharing of data could contribute to create new insights, improve the performance of the government, stimulate performance and innovation in it, provide new services with added value, and promote economic development.

On the other hand, along with data quality, attention must be given to its easy accessibility and usage. Citizens normally wish to use the government data because they have an impact on their lives. It is therefore assumed that departments are keen to request information from citizens on the usefulness of these data and on their accessibility to ensure their continued improvement. Attention must also be paid to the generation of data published at this phase and to be updated and disseminated in a timely manner.

In this context, it is also necessary to distinguish between the data use, namely, access it for personal benefit and data reuse, in the sense of re-publish, produce or use them (for commercial or other purposes), where in the latter case the provisions of the legislation on privacy and intellectual property rights must be taken into account. The reuse of data could have financial implications, as provided under relevant legislation or regulations.

Although openness in terms of access to information on government activities and public affairs is a prerequisite for ultimately engaging citizens effectively, the one-way flow of information at this phase only makes a limited contribution to strengthening accountability, because the Government is satisfied here to deal with the citizens as a recipient only. This is in addition to simply access to data without strengthening the capacity to handle it to extract “information” from it remains insufficient to bring about the desired impact of openness.

2. Supporting technology

At this phase, the technology used is not a decisive factor in implementation, since any technology from the information and communication technologies can be used. For example, traditional Web applications (i.e., government departments Web sites, e-mail, database and stationary and other) may be quite adequate at this phase to make government data available on the web and share it with citizens, without necessarily having to switch to social media, or applications dedicated for mobile devices. What matters primarily here is to meet the requirements of open data and quality for transparency, and to raise public awareness of the importance of openness and accountability of government and easy access to information.

3. Operational procedures

(a) Data inventory

The first openness procedure relates to the identification of deployable data in the first phase, which requires an inventory of the available data in each of the relevant government departments. We reiterate that the objective at this phase is not to release as much data as possible, but to disseminate the highly important data only.

The application of the Pareto principle, in this case, indicates that 20 per cent of the data can produce 80 per cent of the intended effect. When conducting the inventory, it is first recommended to determine approximately the 20 per cent of the high-value data that could provide the greatest benefit to citizens, and then complete the inventory of the rest of the data which are subsequently dealt with by the relevant government department.³⁵ It is always useful – in this context – to look at the data disseminated by other government departments, or in other countries.

The Government could, depending on its approved policies, disaggregate government data, both at the national level or at the level of each government department, in order to identify high-priority data, taking into account the “sensitivity” of these data, its importance to the citizen, or the level of complexity in its dissemination, or other standards. For example, data can be classified into the following categories:

- Economic data;
- Financial data;
- Data related to government purchases and public spending;
- Data on support;
- Outstanding data on labour and employment;
- Population data;
- Environmental data;
- Data on education;
- Cultural and tourism data;
- Geographical and spatial data;
- Government archives;
- Others.

Different categories of beneficiaries can be also distinguished: citizens, business people, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations and all other government departments. Surveys or meetings can be conducted to explore the needs of all stakeholders and prioritise open data. To increase equity in the distribution of data, the principle of including data reaching the government administration by requests could be adopted in the priority data list.

(b) *Quality assurance of available data*

Sunlight Foundation (a non-profit and non-governmental organization active in promoting openness of governments) has determined ten principles to evaluate the extent to which government data is open and accessible to the public.³⁶ To identify the publicly releasable data and ensure its quality, such principles can be adopted here with some appropriate modifications:

- (1) Completeness, data selected for publication must be as complete as possible, including all what is available on a particular subject, without prejudice to the controls of personal data; this permit users to understand the scope covered by the available information in the widest possible detail;
- (2) Primacy, government actors must be the primary source of data, and details on how to collect data and prepare them for dissemination can be given;
- (3) Timeliness, releasable data should be current and available in a timely fashion. It is vital to disseminate data once collected and gathered with priority given to data whose utility is time sensitive;
- (4) Accessibility, releasable data must be as accessible as possible, whether through physical or electronic means. Obstacles to physical access to information, for example, include requirements to visit specific government offices in person, or requirements to perform procedures (such as completing forms or submitting requests). Obstacles to electronic data access include making data available solely through systems that require the use of specific browsers or technologies (e.g., JavaScript, Java applets). It is also possible to develop standardised interfaces to download information with sophisticated search capabilities;
- (5) Machine readability, it is preferable that released data be machine-readable, where it is very difficult to process handwritten notes or scanned files in the form of images;
- (6) Non-discrimination, there may be a range of barriers which may preclude the use of data, such as pre-registration requirements, or not allowing access to data except through some applications. It is therefore essential that the selected data for dissemination be made available allowing anyone to access the data at any time and without having to provide any justifications;
- (7) Use of open formats, selected releasable data must be made available using open formats, accessing them should not be dependent upon the use of processing programmes from specific sources, or programmes requiring a software license (e.g.: MS Excel), as the removal of such costs makes the data accessible to a broader pool of potential users of the data;³⁷
- (8) Terms of use, the imposition of licensing requirements to access services is one of the barriers that restrict the public use of data; openness explicitly imposes the availability of data selected for dissemination without any restrictions on their use, considering they fall within the scope of the public domain;
- (9) Permanence, the continued ability to find information over time is an indication of quality and competence, selected releasable data for dissemination should be fixed, in the sense that it should always remain available online (even if archived). Often times, information would be updated, changed or deleted without any indication to that modification. For that, it is preferable the selected releasable data remain available on the Web from the moment of its creation, with the tracking of different versions and archiving over time;

- (10) Usage cost, one of the most critical impediments to access data is the cost that might be imposed on the public for access, even when such cost is at a minimum. Governments may impose a series of fees to maintain and download or process information. Attention must be drawn to the fact that most data is collected primarily for specific purposes of the government's work. Thus, there is no justification in such a case for user charges.

(c) *Data dissemination*

Government data is usually disseminated gradually, according to priorities, on the web either on the government administration website (at this phase) or on a separate portal for open data, whether governmental or public, on which all open government data is released from all departments.

It would be preferable that the web site or portals to which the data is published contain the minimum possibilities to facilitate their use, such as Help pages, FAQ, the ability to send comments and suggestions, and even discussion forums. However, in the process of selecting priority and high-value data prepared for deployment, it is essential to put a stated plan to disseminate such data with a clear time frame for publishing and updating.

Although electronic data dissemination is the foundation, it is also possible at this phase to make data available by more traditional means (e.g. dissemination of government information in printed, periodic reports on CD-ROMs). In particular, traditional methods could be used in the case of information made available upon request from one or more interested parties (versus data published publicly at the initiative of the government administration).

(d) *Management and Evaluation*

The process of data dissemination is subject to specific procedures in each relevant government department, including the identification of organizational structures responsible for this work, interoperability, and the rules for selecting data for publication, as well as the design of database structures and content management systems and other information systems, which allow information to be gathered, stored, categorized, retrieved, indexed and archived.

Some government departments have set up a data management committee, and/or appointed a "Chief Data Officer", assisted by a number of "Data managers", whose task is to follow-up on the operational procedures mentioned above, and evaluate the work and activities completed to ensure their sustainability, as well as the reassessment of administrative procedures conducive to the selection of data prepared for publication and the information systems used.

4. *Measuring indicators*

The importance of the openness phase lies in the fact that it strengthens transparency, enables a culture of openness among government departments and increases citizen participation in government work. It is sufficient at this phase for administrations to use quantifiable measuring indicators, rather than trying to measure impact, because of the difficulty of measuring the actual value of citizen participation at this phase. Some of the most important quantitative measuring indicators to consider are the number of published datasets; the number of times the data is downloaded; frequency of visits; the duration of stay at the Website; the number of channels of communication available; the number of available data analysis tools and data update rate.

In addition, a set of qualitative indicators, namely: public understanding of open government initiatives and services; overall public satisfaction on interaction with Government; culture change of government departments towards openness; data accuracy and consistency; timeliness and relevance of data.

D. PHASE TWO: PARTICIPATION

The main purpose of the second phase can be determined by promoting citizen participation in government work, through the following general objectives:

- (a) Enhance interaction with citizens, civil society organisations, and enhance receipt of feedback and suggestions;
- (b) Improve decision-making mechanisms;
- (c) enhance inclusiveness;
- (d) Intensify use of ICTs, particularly social media, to increase efficiency and timeliness;
- (e) Combat corruption, build trust and openness methodology.

1. *Focus area*

In the second phase, government departments seek, through communication with citizens, to strengthen open government culture and practices. If the government's goal at the first phase is to "make available" government data to the citizen, this second phase concerns openness to the citizens' "participation" in providing ideas, knowledge, comments and suggestions to the government which leads to increased inclusiveness, and improved citizen contributions to government work and in decision-making, through multiple methods and tools that allow the reception, utilization, publication and dissemination of inputs provided by citizens.

We point out here that citizen participation could be either directly, in their individual capacity, or through their involvement in civil society organizations/NGOs that represent them in their field of work. It might be easier, at the outset at least, to have interaction between the government and civil society organisations/NGOs, especially when participation involves issues concerning government policies or decision-making.

Benefits of improved open participation include:

- (a) Continuous dialogue, based on communication;
- (b) Obtain a variety of feedback, in a timely manner;
- (c) Increase sense of community in government departments;
- (d) Reduce time and cost of innovation, as the interaction and information exchange between citizens and government officials is conducive to a better investment of open data, leading to further innovation.

This phase underscores the need to go beyond the mere fact of achieving transparency towards enhancing the full and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in government programmes. In this direction, the role of the government is transformed from a "service provider" into a system that listens to the concerns of citizens and responds to their needs as quickly and accurately as possible, through ongoing "general debates and discussions" aimed at improving the quality of Government decisions down to a more effective and efficient public service delivery.

The ability of government departments to benefit from the feedback provided by the citizens, at the appropriate speed and time, is the core of this phase which necessitates clarity in the description of the procedures, establishment of appropriate mechanisms, and the allocation of government officials to respond to such information.

2. Supporting technology

Contrary to the used conventional methods to obtain feedback such as surveys and opinion polls, expressive social media allows the citizen to engage in a spontaneous and informal participation, which at the same time allows to hold an interactive dialogue with the Government. Departments seek to collect the experiences and expertise of citizens from this dialogue, using multiple techniques such as blogs, voting opinion polls and competitions. Government departments use the multitude of ideas, submitted by individuals with diverse backgrounds, to help them make credible, reliable and timely decisions. The use of information and communications technology to facilitate the “two-way” information flow can support genuine participation by encouraging frequent interaction and timely and specific response. This fundamental role that information and communications technology, in general, and social media, in particular, can play in enabling the widest range of citizens groups making their voices heard in policy discussions. It should be noted that the extensive use of social media (and ICT in general) to increase the participation of citizens and civil society organisations/NGOs, and raise the level of inclusiveness, is directly linked to improving the communications infrastructure and lowering costs use.

In order to achieve citizen participation in government work as effectively as possible, it is imperative for government departments at this phase to carry out a technological shift towards “expressive” social media, Web 2.0 applications and the semantic web in order to benefit from the possibilities made by these means of expression (including dialogue forums, blogs, photo and video sharing and participatory content) in generating ideas and screening them. Many of those social media outlets are available today, but it is preferable that administrations start using the most popular media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube.

3. Operational procedures

(a) Mechanisms for dealing with social media outlets

The use of social media is the cornerstone for the second phase, therefore, the first action at this phase will be to establish a clear mechanism that includes in the minimum guidelines for dealing with these means, especially between government departments, and to identify applications that can be used to implement participatory projects (see below), as well as mechanisms to use them.

Social media can be introduced first in public relations and citizens services departments in government administration to receive feedback on published government data and government services, and to establish virtual dialogues with user groups according to their interests. It is always useful, in this context, to encourage personnel to use social media in their fields of work, rather than consider them as external tools to the mechanisms of government work. This allows the integration of working procedures and the gradual transition from participation towards more effective collaboration between the government and the citizen in the next phase.

The use of social media always requires clear objectives. It is the responsibility of the senior management in each government to define these goals and added value expected to be obtained from citizen participation using social media and evaluating the results consistently. A programme should also be established and implemented to train and sensitize government employees on the basis of the use of social media and adherence to the institution’s social media policy.

(b) Implementation of participatory programmes

Implementation of participatory projects is nothing new, what is new here is to create new mechanisms to motivate and maximize citizen participation in government activities; this requires a new pattern of approaches with clear goals and mechanisms of action, including the mechanisms for preparation, implementation and evaluation. Table 3.1 shows key questions associated with identifying such mechanisms.³⁸

TABLE 3.1 GUIDELINES FOR WORKING MECHANISMS IN GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES INVOLVING THE CITIZEN

Preparation phase	What should be achieved explicitly with the activity?
	Who are the stakeholders involved in this activity?
	What are the objectives and benefits of citizen participation in this activity?
	What are the objectives and envisaged benefits of citizen participation in this activity?
	What are the financial and human resources needed to implement the activity?
	What is the time frame of the activity?
Implementation phase	What is the procedure for implementation?
	What are the mechanisms and channels of citizen participation in the activity?
	What tools can a citizen use to participate online?
	How can the citizen's participation in this activity be stimulated?
	How can the added value of citizen participation in the activity be increased?
	What are the criteria used in all participations (e.g., data formats)?
Evaluation phase	What are the criteria used to evaluate citizen participation in this activity?
	What is the intended impact of citizen participation in this activity?

In the framework of open government application, it is useful to focus on policies and programmes that motivate citizens to engage in government activities. Bernhard Krabina has proposed a “ladder” that measures and evaluates citizen’s participation on successive degrees “down” (i.e. from a strategic point of view), or “up” (i.e. from an operative point of view), to reach a real impact of citizen participation on the quality and breadth of government service delivery.

Aside from this participation ladder, the different types of citizen participants can be classified (or the parties involved generally) into the following types:

- (1) Creators, who proactively create and publish contents;
- (2) Critics, who create and publish contents in a reactive and participatory way;
- (3) Collectors, who subscribe to social media, with no regular participation;
- (4) Spectators, who merely consume the contents without actively contributing;
- (5) “Inactives”, who is primarily not concerned with participation.

In this context, the portals intended for data dissemination must be utilized (see the previous phase) to collect and compile citizen’s posts, with the addition of the necessary technical functions; this allows for a smooth transition, technologically, from phase I to phase II and the building of an open government “ecosystem” comprising government departments, citizens, business people and other relevant groups.

4. *Measuring indicators*

Government departments at this phase continue to use quantitative measurement instruments to measure the level of citizen participation. Some of the most important quantitative indicators can be used here: number of visitors, fans and followers of social media; the number of ideas presented by the citizen; ratio of publications to remarks; voting rate; trends in public participation; number of “out of control” cases like harassment and abusive comments.

In addition, there are some qualitative indicators, such as: changing the culture of government departments towards openness; general satisfaction with government interaction; benefits of general comments; published innovative ideas.

E. PHASE THREE: COLLABORATION

The main purpose of the third phase is to strengthen collaboration between citizens and government, through the following general objectives:

- (a) Involving all parties: government, the private sector, civil society/NGOs and the public;
- (b) Deliberations of public policies and decisions;
- (c) Responding by providing the right services according to the needs of the beneficiaries;
- (d) Work towards achieving an agile government and rejuvenating its institutions.

1. *Focus area*

Once government departments succeed in increasing data transparency and improving open participation; they could transition to phase three by promoting open collaboration between government departments, citizens, civil society/NGOs and the private sector. This phase focuses on the role of social media as a tool for “collaboration”, as opposed to focusing on its role as a tool for “expression” in the previous phase.

The focus of government departments at this phase goes beyond the traditional collaboration activities that may exist between departments towards collaboration with the citizen and the private sector, in order to provide innovative, value-added government services in a manner that allows access and participation by the targeted customers, at any location, at any time.

Collaboration at this phase aims to encourage the effective participation of citizens in the design and delivery of public services, by:

- (a) Strengthening communication and flow of information between government agencies and citizens;
- (b) Establishing partnership and collaboration between different government parties, as well as between government stakeholders and citizens in the design and implementation of targeted programmes;
- (c) Achieving advanced levels of participation, through open public debate on planned government policies and programmes;
- (d) Reaching advanced levels of participation through open public deliberations on planned government policies and programmes;
- (e) Citizen’s contribution to government decision-making.

Citizens’ participation, through civil society organisations that they could be affiliated with, in complex government tasks and projects achieves more openness in government departments, resulting in synergistic effects of different collaborating parties, in addition to results achieved in time and cost savings, higher quality, and more innovation for government services.

At the collaboration phase, the final decision-making authority remains vested in policy makers across government departments, who may not adequately adapt to the results of cooperative activities. However, the Government recognises the vital contribution of citizens at this phase to develop ideas and find new solutions.

Government departments here act as intermediaries, which seek to provide a platform to bring together all stakeholders to collaborate for the realisation of common purposes; consequently, the citizen changes from a passive recipient of Government solutions to an active contributor in collaborating with government officials to find the best ways to improve public service delivery, and policy formulation and decision-making.

The Pareto Principle mentioned earlier applies not only to phase one but also to phases two and three; that is, government departments continue until this point to only pick high-value and high-impact services and focus mainly on strengthening what is being implemented rather than worrying about what is not.

2. Supporting technology

At this phase, ICTs and social media networks (figure 3.2), play a crucial role in promoting cooperation between government and citizens. This technology becomes a powerful instrument for promoting non-hierarchical, streamline government institutions and collaborative approaches in policymaking.

Exponential growth in social media, mobile phones applications and significantly lower costs reduce communication barriers, support the direct participation of citizens in all regions, even in rural and remote areas, and facilitate the creation of cooperative platforms to broaden participation in political decision-making. ICTs contribute to lower “cost of expressing views”, and enhance the openness in public deliberation, on the one hand, and the expanding of public service delivery and improving the quality, on the other. This technology will permit the emergence of a “crisis napper community” that goes beyond the borders of one country and collaborates to achieve their objectives effectively in a way that was not available earlier.³⁹

We note that the priority use of social media tools at this phase does not prevent the continuation of the use of some other non-technological means of communication, such as organising workshops and direct meetings between representatives of the government departments and citizens (through civil society organisations/NGOs) for interaction and lively debate.

3. Operational procedures

(a) Collaborative technology use

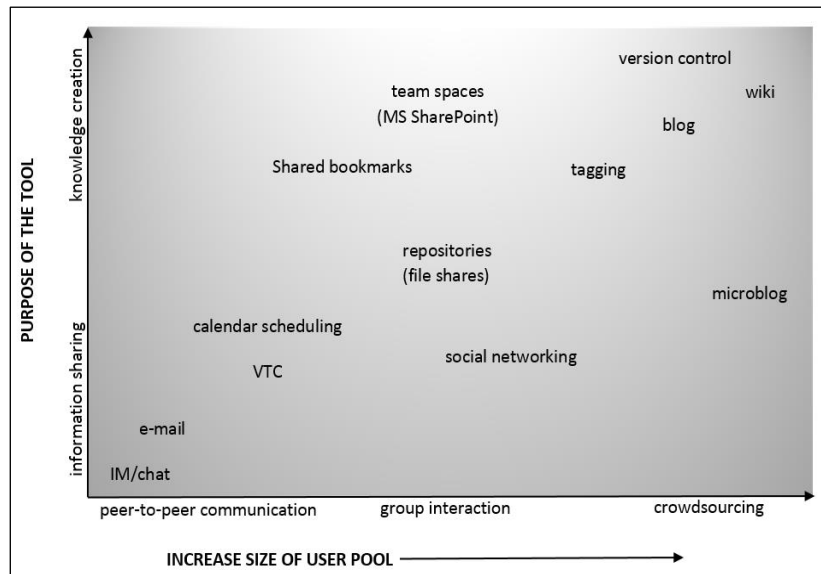
At this phase, it is necessary to give attention to the use of new technology and information tools that allow “collaborative projects” to be put into practice. Unlike expressive social media tools (traditional), these tools are less common and more complex concerning design and use. It is imperative, at the start of this phase, to monitor the tools available (whether available for general use or not) and classify them in terms of their functions.

For example, figure 3.2 depicts a classification of collaborative tools in terms of their purpose and volume of their user base.⁴⁰ It is essential to focus on the requirements of privacy, confidentiality and ease of use when monitoring these tools.

Detailed criteria that could be considered when choosing the appropriate tool:

- (1) Is the tool technologically available?
- (2) Does the tool require installation by the user?
- (3) Does the tool require registration procedures?
- (4) Does the use of the tool require submission of data about the users?
- (5) Do these data go to a third party?
- (6) Does the tool guarantee data integrity?
- (7) Is the use of the tool free or paid?
- (8) Is the tool impervious to security and safety (hacking)?

Figure 3.2 Classification of collaborative tools



Source: Krabina, Bernhard, and Brigitte Lutz, *Implementation of Open Government – Version 3.0* (Vienna: Centre for Public Administration Research, 2016), p. 52.

(b) *Implementing collaborative projects*

When implementing collaborative projects, it is imperative to first look for “cooperation partners”, since the primary objective of this phase is to target the appropriate cooperation partners, by topic, and not necessarily cooperate with all citizens at the same time, as was the focus of the previous phase.

It is apparent that it is not easy to undertake a comprehensive classification of citizens by their interests, but can, in turn, make use of information and data provided today by “information society” (with the need to be alert not to breach the provisions on privacy and personal data), such as information obtained from possible business networks (e.g.: LinkedIn), specialized collaborative networks (e.g.: SlideShare), lists of participants in specialized conferences and events, and specialized groups of citizens (e.g. members of the teaching staff at universities), etc.⁴¹

In general, collaborative projects can be classified by type, management and beneficiaries, as follows:⁴²

- (1) Open administrative cooperation, this type of collaborative projects focuses on the participation of citizens or the representatives of civil society organisations/NGOs on the initiative of the public administration department who actively shapes the process. For example, citizens are involved in advisory councils, and such projects could be included in the context of activities “Government-to-Government” (G2G);
- (2) Citizen sourcing, in this type of participatory or collaborative projects, citizens help to fulfil (or assist in fulfilling) public duties as co-producers (such as mobilize ideas; finish some work the government needs through the assistance of public citizens, like collecting data, or even mobilize funding in some cases). Even though public administration is mainly responsible for this type of activities, citizens can influence the direction and the results and may assist in day-to-day implementation. These projects could be included in the context of activities “Citizen to Government” (C2G);
- (3) Public-civic partnership, in this type of collaborative projects, public administration and citizens share the responsibilities equally. Both sides contribute their specific skills in order to solve problems together and generate public value. These projects could be included in the context of activities “Government with citizen” (G+C);

- (4) Government as a platform, in this type of collaborative projects, public administration helps citizens organize themselves. The public administration is not directly responsible for the activities but can work its powers and influence to generate higher public value. These projects could be included in the context of activities “Government to citizen” (G2C);
- (5) Do it yourself government, in this kind of collaborative projects, citizens help themselves and each other. Public administration plays no active role in daily activities but can provide supporting conditions and frameworks. These projects could be included in the context of activities “citizen to citizen” (C2C).

4. Measuring indicators

As in the previous two phases, the use of quantitative measurement mechanisms remains predominant at this phase. Among the most important quantitative indicators that can be used here are the number of cases of cooperation between institutions and citizens; the number of instances of collaboration between the public and private sectors; the number and variety of external partnerships; and the number of value-added services that had been created. Some impact indicators could be added to these indicators, such as the extent of the quality and innovation of collaboration inputs and public satisfaction with Government interaction.

F. PHASE FOUR: FULL ENGAGEMENT

The main purpose of the fourth phase is to achieve the full engagement of citizens in government work, through the following general objectives:

- (a) Comprehensive access to data and services;
- (b) Engagement of all parties (citizens, civil society organizations/NGOs, private sector alongside government) in policy-making and decision making;
- (c) Build a citizen-centred and accountable government;
- (d) Open government sustainability;
- (e) Effective contribution to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

We recall that the target of all previous phases should be to reach full citizens’ engagement, but the attainment of this target has been divided into phases in order to take into account the development of different dimensions of the open government: institutional, organizational, human, technological, culture and public awareness whether in government, or by citizens and/or other stakeholders, namely the private sector and civil society institutions.

1. Focus area

The implementation of open government is achieved at this fourth and final phase based on the implementation of the preceding three phases. Government departments at this phase work to leverage transparency, participation and collaboration to the next level of total citizen engagement and participation in government work, i.e. the explicit citizens’ engagement in public decision-making processes. Government departments at this phase also work to control and improve existing open government initiatives to maximize their benefit and to expand their activities in these initiatives to provide further benefits to citizens.

Government departments in this fourth phase strive to achieve two important goals:

- (a) The first goal is to make citizens’ access to government data, participation and collaboration easier and more accessible through mobile and ubiquitous computing devices and applications especially smartphones, tablets and even play devices. Conversely, government websites and applications are optimized to these platforms to ensure effective integration of the various platforms and smooth mobility among them;

(b) The second goal is to ensure seamless integration between the various tools and methods of involving citizens in the activities of government departments, so as to ensure that citizens can easily navigate and engage in several activities without having to keep logging in and out and move between different applications.

At this phase, the government departments work on establishing effective government structures and procedures to enable continuous improvement and innovation in citizen engagement programmes. Furthermore, departments also work with citizens, the private sector and all other stakeholders to build a strong ecosystem for effective engagement and ensure its sustainability.

The highest level of openness becomes the norm at this phase, which is characterized by citizen engagement in government decision-making, in the context of a mutual and equitable relationship between competent government employees, users and the overall surrounding environment. This requires to redefine the relationship between government officials and citizens from the traditional form of “dependency” into “parity”, where the citizen becomes an active player in the design and delivery of public services, so that the “human capital” of citizens would be dealt with as a major asset in developing public programmes, planning and development activities and delivering public service. This means – on the ground – a kind of power-sharing between government departments, the private sector and civil society/NGOs and the general public. Achieving this requires a full liberalisation of accessibility to information and the expansion of public deliberations to the maximum.

If the first phase of the proposed framework for implementing open government is the anchor on which to build the second and third phases, this final phase is the outcome of all procedures and activities undertaken and implemented in the three previous phases, leading to citizen engagement in decision-making on public affairs. The overall objectives of open government remain in place at all phases of implementation and one of the significant objectives is the continuous strengthening of transparency, grounded on the right of the general public to access government data and information (generally enforced by law, see chapter VI on open government legislation).

Of the most important attributes of openness and transparency (highlighted since the first phase) is that it leads to accountability, i.e. to strengthen the government’s responsibility for its actions, decisions, policies and public spending to citizens. Access to information puts the government under popular oversight, supports democratic practices, and pushes government decisions to be better geared to respond to the needs of citizens, which, in turn, leads to more efficient and effective public services. All this generates citizens’ trust in the Government and the feeling that the Government has nothing to hide from them.⁴³

Even though planning for the implementation of open government must be linked to SDGs adopted by the United Nations since the early phases, this phase allows access to the effective contribution to achieve these goals.⁴⁴

2. Supporting technology

As in the previous phase, ICTs at this phase play a crucial role. Social networks, in their various forms, can be used to support decision-making in a non-hierarchical manner, allowing all citizens’ voices to be heard.

There are some critical factors that affect the extent to which technology contributes to the implementation of projects on engagement. This relates to three main factors:

- (a) Cost of project implementation, where cost is a traditional obstacle to project sustainability. ICTs play a role in reducing costs and increasing the pace of implementation;
- (b) Results are consistent with the objectives, as ICTs allow for more effective project implementation, comply results with set targets and facilitate monitoring and evaluation processes;
- (c) The institutional acceptance of the change and the technological tools used in this process.

3. *Operational procedures*

As mentioned above, this phase is the outcome of the previous three phases together, and all the operational procedures at these phases continue to be maintained, strengthened, expanded and transferred to new platforms (e.g. mobile platforms). First, it is necessary to learn from previous phases, and – in particular – benefit from citizens feedback, to assess the actions and activities undertaken and implemented in previous phases, intending to transfer expertise within government departments, to maximise openness.

New tools and functions could be added to technology platforms that support engagement such as:

- (a) Expanding specialised dialogue forums, for example, to gather information or consultations and solicit proposals or identify problems and discussions on how to address them;
- (b) Expanding potentials of voting and opinion polls;
- (c) Broadening public debates, especially in the political context;
- (d) Decision support tools;
- (e) Collaborative tools in preparing and editing documents.

It is possible, at this phase, to take new steps to increase transparency and openness, such as:

- (a) Increase financial transparency: financing mechanisms, subsidies, financing of political parties and non-governmental institutions;
- (b) Correct public budgets and control of public spending (a topic which citizens usually demonstrate special interest);
- (c) Improve the terms of government procurement and the use of electronic reverse auctions to increase transparency;
- (d) Declare the incomes of senior government officials;
- (e) Disseminate all data on public services;
- (f) Enhance freedom of expression.

After strengthening and bolstering actions taken in earlier phases, it is imperative to question how to ensure sustainability, with the aim of making citizens become a key player in decision-making processes and raise “public value”.⁴⁵ This requires comprehensive restructuring of governmental agencies and departments, giving a new role for government institutions that is commensurate with the policy of vast openness so that the role of government would facilitate partnerships among the various stakeholders and empower citizens and local communities to participate in the management of public resources.

4. *Measuring indicators*

At this phase, government departments start to use outcome/impact centric metrics in addition to continued use of quantity-centric metrics tools as in previous phases. Measuring impact allows the exploration of the outcomes of the implementation of open government initiatives. They measure not only financial and physical performance but also non-financial performance, such as innovation and learning, to ensure that openness becomes the norm for both the government culture and citizen engagement. Consequently, the visions and goals set out in the Open Government Directives are fully realized at this phase. The main measuring indicators could be used here: the increase in public participation and collaboration, both public and private; level of integration between open government services and procedures; tangible benefit of citizen engagement tools and applications; evaluation of the overall user experience; continued citizen participation over time; impact of the open government application at the level of transparency, accountability and trust;

impact of the open government on the level of the open government responsiveness to the demands of citizens; and the impact of open government application on productivity and innovation.

This is in addition to other traditional measurement indicators, such as: the number of mobile phone users; the number of users of platforms, applications and services and the increase in the number of users and data sets that have been shared.

G. OVERALL RESULT

Finally, in table 3.2, we sum up areas of concern, expected outputs, and benefits for each phase of the open government implementation framework:⁴⁶

TABLE 3.2 AREAS OF INTEREST, EXPECTED DELIVERABLES, AND BENEFITS FOR EACH PHASE OF THE OPEN GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Phase	Focus area	Deliverables	Benefits
Phase I: Openness (for transparency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency of government processes and performance; • Data Quality; • Raising awareness on the importance of openness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government data is published and shared online; • Government processes and policy information is published and shared online; • Focus on high-value, high-impact data such as cost and performance; • Data quality improvement: accuracy, consistency, and timeliness; • Feedback from the public on the usefulness and quality of data; • Procedural/quantitative-centric metrics are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public awareness and knowledge of government data, processes, and policies followed; • Increased government accountability; • Improved data quality: accuracy, consistency, and timeliness; • Foundation of performance improvement; • Preparation of value-added online services; • The cultural shift to openness begins; • The public is engaged through open data.
Phase II: Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public feedback, conversation, and ideation; • Interactive communications; • Collective Participation; • Expressive social media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pervasive use of social media for interactive conversations, storytelling, and communications between the public and government; • Voting, polling and feedback capabilities; • Timely and consistent responses to feedback; • Resource pooling to benefit from the experiences, ideas, and expertise of the citizen; • Posted user produced/generated content; • Focus on mainstream social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube; • Procedural/quantitative--centric metrics used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time, instant, diverse feedback from the public; • Ongoing, community-based conversation and discussion about; • Reduced cost and time for innovation; • More innovation; • Greater sense of community affiliation centred around the government; • Cultural transformation towards greater momentum for openness; • The public is engaged through conversation; • Increase citizens' trust in government.

TABLE 3.2 (continued)

Phase	Focus area	Deliverables	Benefits
Phase III: Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency collaboration; • Open collaboration with the citizens; • Co-creating value-added services; • Collaborative social media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency collaboration on complex projects and decision making; • Open collaboration with the public to solve complex problems and issues; • Collaboration between the public and private sectors to create value-added services for the public; • Open collaboration for policymaking and decision-making; • Collaborative response to emergencies and natural disasters; • Use of collaborative social media such as Google Docs, wikis; • Open collaboration processes are embedded and implemented online; • Procedural/quantitative -centric metrics used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergistic effect of interagency collaboration: time/cost savings and higher quality outputs; • Time/cost savings and innovations in partnership with citizens; • The public benefits from high quality, innovative services developed by the private sector; • New policies and rules are made through open collaboration processes; • Effective and efficient responses to emergencies and natural disasters; • Openness is widely accepted in government; • The public is engaged through tasks and projects.
Phase IV: Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide mechanisms to involve citizens in business and government decisions; • Increase transparency, participation, and collaboration; • Ubiquitous and continuous public engagement; • Integrated public engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding the scope and depth of transparency, participation, and collaboration capabilities; • Integrated and seamless deployment of multiple channels of social media within and across agencies; • Use of mobile, ubiquitous computing platforms for continuous engagement; • Integrated ecosystem for citizen engagement; • Integrated governance structure and processes for public engagement; • Outcome/impact-centric metrics in addition to qualitative-centric metrics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public engages extensively through multiple channels of social media; • The public engages continuously and seamlessly in various government activities and programmes through ubiquitous computing platforms; • Public engagement through an entire lifetime; • Effective systems to ensure the sustainability and improvement of citizen engagement; • Openness becomes a norm for government culture; • Benefits of open government are fully realized.

Source: ESCWA, based on the proposals contained in this part.

4. OPEN GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

A. INTRODUCTION

The right to access information is a fundamental human right because it leads to the consolidation of other rights related to freedom of opinion and participation in public life, and therefore strengthens democratic practices. Also, it has a fundamental impact on strengthening accountability and transparency and the disclosure of potential corruption cases, through the extension of oversight on the performance of governments, both at the central and local levels.

The right to information has been recognized in international forums since early 1946, in UN General Assembly Resolution number 59 on Freedom of Information which stipulates that freedom of information is a “fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated”; Reference could also be made in this regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 and the International Covenant of Civil and Political rights of 1976, which are binding treaties, including the Right of Free Expression, and the Right to Request and Transfer Information.⁴⁷ Reference could also be made to the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003, initiated by the fact that public availability of information is one of the means to prevent corruption and it urged to undertake measures be taken to enhance transparency in public administrations and streamline administrative procedures.

To entrench this right and ensure its proper application, countries usually enact special legislation and/or make decisions, regulations or operational instructions. These legislations call, at the minimum, to recognize the right of the public to access government information, i.e. the citizen’s right to know what the Government is doing and have access to data and information on the programmes, operations and government services. At an advanced stage, this law imposes “proactive disclosure”, which means the publication of some categories of government information at the initiative of government departments, in contrast to their availability in response to a request by one or more citizens or any interested party. It could also provide regulations for the disclosure of some private enterprise information. The law may also provide for measures relating to “re-use”, i.e. the use of information outside the scope leading to its collection and availability, whether for commercial or non-commercial purposes.

As an example of legislation regarding the right to access, use and reuse of information, the evolution of some European guidelines and regulations on this subject can be reviewed:

(a) In 1995, the European Commission issued Directive 95/46/EC about the processing of personal data; this provision was repealed in 2016 and replaced by Regulation No. 679.^{48,49} These provisions, although not directly related to open government, remain – as will be seen – an important legislative complement in this context;

(b) In 2001, the European Parliament issued Regulation No. 1049, which stipulated controls for public access to documents of the European Parliament and the European Commission;⁵⁰

(c) In 2003, the European Commission issued Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information;⁵¹

(d) In 2003, the European Commission issued Directive 2003/98/EC, about controlling reuse of public sector information; this text was amended in 2013 by Directive 2013/37/EU issued by EU.^{52,53}

In the Arab world, some countries have passed legislation on access to government data and information, while others are still working on it. These provisions fall within the context of open government activities in those countries. A limited number of Arab countries has approved the Right of Access to Information Law: Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, while the State of Palestine is preparing this law.

B. THE RIGHT TO ACCESS TO INFORMATION LEGISLATION

This section presents a brief overview of the most important provisions that could be covered by a model legislation for the right to access to information. The full study can be reviewed for further details.

1. *The purpose and scope of the law*

The law initially provides for its purpose, and the scope of its application, which includes, in particular, ensuring access to categories of government data and information, in multiple ways and mechanisms, for the purpose of enhancing transparency and accountability, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of government and the quality of services provided and increasing citizen involvement in public affairs and decision-making procedures. The scope of the law may be expanded to add to government data some of the data owned by private entities (private sector) when such data are substantively linked to government data, or the right to obtain them enhances the exercise of a citizen's rights and participation in public life.

2. *General principles*

The law stipulates the general principles underlying the access to government data and information (and others, if any); it differentiates between proactive disclosure of information items and the availability of other items to those applying for it. The law confirms the importance of informing the public of their rights to access government data and information, as well as ensures equality and equal opportunities for citizens in making information available to them and process their applications.

3. *Applications for access to and processing of information*

The law provides for mechanisms for applying for information, such as submitting the application in writing or electronic form. The law also states information to be provided by the applicant (name, address, etc.), provided that the applicant is not required to indicate any grounds for their interest in the information requested, as long as there is no legal barrier to disclosing this information.

The law provides for mechanisms for processing requests for information, particularly in terms of time limits (e.g.: the necessity to respond to the request within a maximum of 15 days), and in terms of approval or rejection statement, with the need for the government administration to provide detailed justification in the event of rejection or refusal.

4. *Proactive disclosure*

The law provides for the principle of proactive disclosure, i.e. the publication of some categories of government information as an initiative from government departments, without the need for applying any request. This information is based on data of interest to the wider public and linked to its vital interests and allows it to familiarise itself with the work of government departments in a manner that promotes transparency and accountability and contributes toward realising the objectives of open government. The law encourages government departments to publish as much of their data as possible through proactive disclosure but provides for specific types of information that each government department, as well as the Government as a whole, must disclose.

5. *The right to follow public meetings*

The law stipulates the principle of allowing the interested citizen to attend or follow-up on specific meetings held in government departments, that is to say, where such meetings are open to the public, either in their presence personally or by electronic means. One of the targeted meetings are those held by decision-making bodies or councils and local municipal councils so that citizens to exert their right to engage in Government decision-making.

The Law establishes the measures for meetings that are open to the public, such as the announcement of the date and venue of the meeting, the purpose of the meeting and arrangements for attending meetings in person, mechanisms for participation in discussions and submitting proposals, etc. No interested person may be prevented from attending or following open meetings, but by the exceptions specified in the law.

6. Reuse of government information

The law, in addition to the right to request information, and the obligation to provide proactive disclosure, address the right to republish or reuse the data obtained. In principle, data accessible by law are reusable, i.e., usable outside the scope of collection and made available, whether for commercial or non-commercial purposes, except as otherwise provided in the text of the law.

The law might require an application to re-use the information, and it sets clear time limits for processing the requests to reuse and respond to them. The government administration is committed to elaborate on the justifications if a request for reuse is rejected. In all cases, the law provides that the conditions for reuse should be non-discriminatory in similar cases of re-use.

7. Exceptions and refusal of disclosure

The Law provides for exceptional cases in which the government administration has the right not to disclose information to the public, or reject the request to obtain data for reuse, or keep such exceptions to the minimum possible.

Of the most important exceptions of availability and disclosure which the law states are:

- (a) Damage to the public interest: the exclusion of some data regarding national security, defence, international relations and economic or financial interests of the country;
- (b) Damage to the individual interest, whether for natural or legal persons: exception of personal data protected by law, data on commercial interests, information subject to intellectual property protection, some scientific data and scientific research data etc.;
- (c) Data on oversight and ongoing judicial and criminal investigations and the like;
- (d) Internal documents in government departments concerning ongoing acts, or views or suggestions pending a final decision, if disclosed would harm the administration's interest;
- (e) Data belonging to a third party, unless it is originally releasable or after obtaining the third party's consent.

8. Fees and wages

The Law stipulates that access to published information is, in principle, free of charge, especially in the case of data published on government websites and portals. In some cases, fees or charges may be levied on the availability of certain types of data, especially those for which a request is made. Nonetheless, such fees or payments should not be discouraging or prohibitive to the citizen, i.e. based on actual costs, such as photocopying fees. If data is requested for reuse for commercial purposes, expenditure ceilings can be established for the higher fees required especially for public bodies of an economic nature, i.e. those that are bound to make revenue that covers part of their expenses.

9. Regulatory and executive measures

The Law provides for regulatory and executive measures for the implementation of the right to access government information, which must be highly effective and based on advanced data management systems.

The law defines responsibilities and tasks regarding the application of open data at the government level, and in each government department, concerning supervision, coordination, media and promotion. The law may provide for the designation of a chief data officer in each government department who leads the team to determine, collect, analyse, store, classify, make available, update, correct, retrieve, catalogue and archive the information that must be published, and ensure its legal publication and dissemination, as well as the development of directories, indexes and records specific to such data.

10. Review, challenge and appeal

The law includes possible procedures for normal and legal persons to resort to in cases of complaint, challenge and appeal, for example, if a request for information or re-use is denied, if it exceeded the time limits specified by law, or if the available information is not valid or sufficient provided that the procedures of challenge and appeal shall be on degrees:

- (a) A request to the government administration to reconsider its decision or to rectify its procedures;
- (b) Objection to the head of the concerned government administration;
- (c) Objection before a competent senior administrative committee or to the Commissioner-General of information;
- (d) Appeal to the competent judiciary.

11. Annual reports

The Law stipulates that each government department shall publish an annual report on its open data activities (and on the open government activities generally), this report contains:

- (a) Types of information available with the public administration;
- (b) Statistics of requests for information or reuse;
- (c) Types of available information through proactive disclosure;
- (d) Data types excluded from publication;
- (e) Information on general meetings open to the public;
- (f) Information on submitted objections and their processing;
- (g) Information on fees levied and paid.

12. Sanctions and violations

The Law provides for sanctions or punishments imposed in case of violation of the provisions of this Law, whether administrative or penal, depending on the nature and severity of the violation.

13. Amending the violation provisions

Finally, the law provides for the estoppel amendment of any other legislation that contravenes the provisions of this Law or contains provisions limiting the right of access to information.

C. OTHER CYBER LEGISLATION

If the right of access to information Law is one of the most important laws underlying the implementation of open government, most “cyber legislation” (i.e. legislation governing cyberspace and information society) also affects, in one form or another this application. ESCWA issued in 2012 a set of guidelines for the development of cyber legislation, within the framework of the project “Regional Harmonisation of Cyber Legislation to Promote Knowledge Society in the Arab Region”.⁵⁴

These guidelines address the following legislation:

- (a) E-communications and freedom of expression;⁵⁵
- (b) E-transactions and electronic signatures;
- (c) E-commerce and consumer protection;
- (d) Processing and protection of personal data;
- (e) Cybercrime;
- (f) Intellectual property rights in the information and cybercrime fields.

D. OTHER LEGISLATION RELATED TO OPEN GOVERNMENT

In addition to cyber legislation mentioned above, there is other legislation whose provisions – as mentioned above – could be related to open government.

1. *Freedom of Expression Law*

The Freedom of Expression Law stipulates the citizen's right to express his or her views and ideas, whether by speech, writing, photography or by any other means (with restricting freedom of expression in a way that does not disrupt public order). These are added to the fundamental freedom of expression:

- (a) The freedom of scientific research and the dissemination of all its findings resulting therefrom;
- (b) The right to hold private meetings and public meetings (i.e. meetings open to the public).

It is obvious that these provisions can be applied to the use and re-use of available government data, the provision of feedback, ideas and proposals to the Government and the discussion of topics for dialogue, whether by attending meetings in person or using social media.

2. *Media Law*

The Media Law is related to the right of freedom of expression and the right to access and use data and information for media purposes. The Media Law generally provides that the media, with all its means, is independent and delivers its message freely. The practice of media work is based on:

- (a) Freedom of expression and the fundamental freedoms of citizens;
- (b) The citizen's right to access to information related to public affairs;
- (c) Freedom of media work and the right of the press to seek, obtain and disseminate information;
- (d) Respect the privacy and rights of individuals;
- (e) The journalist is not subject to prior censorship, without breaching her/his responsibility for the content published;
- (f) The right not to ask the press to disclose their sources of information, except through the judiciary.

The media Law normally provides for the identification of the categories of information that public bodies are entitled not to disclose, and these situations intersect with exceptional cases in which the government administration have the right to conceal the information from the public, as stipulated in the right of access to information law.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The open government programme should not be viewed as procedural action of a purely administrative nature, regardless of the extent of the envisaged benefits from its implementation in strengthening transparency, accountability, and improving the responsiveness and effectiveness of the government in providing public services to citizens. It should also be linked to the general development goals of the country and reflect the foreseen benefits from the implementation of open government in different areas of development. The following box presents a summary of the open government's role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Goal	Open government contribution in achieving the Goal
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	Increased transparency, effectiveness and accountability to ensure that funds are spent on community priorities
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	Increased transparency and public participation, leading to increased efficiency and programmes to eradicate hunger and consumer protection
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	Availability and transparency of information related to health, in addition to improving accountability systems help in providing higher quality health services
Goal 4: Quality education	Use of open data in the education sector to identify institutions with poor performance and diagnosis of problems and then redraft plans accordingly
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality	Promote gender equality through detecting cases of inequality in a range of issues and sectors
Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation	The adoption of open data and participatory planning for mapping water helps to improve efforts in the planning, distribution and control of water resources
Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy	Direct public policies to ensure affordable, reliable and sustainable access to energy
Goal 8: Economic growth, employment and decent work	Preparation of conditions that would allow the growth of economic activity and support innovation in businesses through the reuse of open government data for new commercial products and services
Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Transparency in the planning and building of public and digital infrastructure facilitates citizen oversight, which would reduce the time and cost and reveal fraud and waste
Goal 10: Reducing inequalities	Allow the voice of citizens to be influential in government decisions increases equal opportunities and reduces injustice
Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities	Increased transparency and public participation of community members in policy formulation and decision-making contribute to enhanced responsiveness and accountability of local government
Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production	Participatory mechanisms allow citizens to be involved in environmental decision-making and ensuring sustainability

The Goal	Open government contribution in achieving the Goal
Goal 13: Climate Action	Transparency enables citizens to monitor funding for climate and climate change funding policies and ensures accountability
Goal 14: Life underwater	Open government is one way to empower communities to ensure sustained supervision on oceans and combating overfishing
Goal 15: Life on land	Effective management of land and resources supports economic growth, helps to protect vulnerable communities, and preserves the environment
Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	Ensures the absence of corruption in government, achieves accountability according to the highest standards and harness new technologies to strengthen governance
Goal 17: Partnership for achieving the goals	Improves government administration and forging global partnerships among multiple stakeholders from governments, the private sector and civil society

The following is a set of general recommendations that might be adopted when applying open government initiatives, drawn from a pool of specialized studies, and best practices in this field.^{56,57,58,59}

1. Adopt a phased implementation approach

As suggested, the open government implementation model should be implemented in sequential phases and should focus on completing one phase at a time. If the government administration decides to work on more than one phase simultaneously (e.g.: launching projects for participation and cooperation at the same time), it will need to address the challenges associated with the change management and the implications of the human and financial resources arising therefrom, which further increase the load of work and reduce the envisaged benefits and may prolong the time needed to reach engagement. In all cases, the government administration must develop detailed operational plans for each phase of the implementation of the open government, based on a clear and declared vision, and to evaluate and amend those plans on an ongoing basis, as new needs evolve.

2. Motivate citizen participation

Alongside the needed change in the organizational culture of the Government, it is necessary to look for a similar change in the culture of the citizen, raising his/her awareness (and civil society institutions/NGOs) of his/her natural right to acquire government data and information. In developing countries, in particular, a state of “mistrust” between the citizen and the Government may prevail because of the non-entrenched principle that the Government, on the one hand, is only a service provider and must seek customer satisfaction, the citizen here, and access to the appropriate service, on the other hand, is the right of the citizen and the Government must optimally respond to him/her. For this reason, it cannot be presumed that a citizen will automatically swarm to participate in the open government activities from the moment of its launch, instead it is imperative to work on building a state of trust, that leads to interest, in a systemic manner, primarily based on the success of addressing feedback from citizens and building on them in a timely manner.

3. Data management

Ensuring the quality of data is one of the most important foundations in phase one of the open government implementation framework (and therefore all other phases); government departments must ensure the accuracy, consistency (especially when disseminated at multiple channels), timeliness, usability (especially in terms of terms used) and usefulness of the data they publish online, its use reuse and share with the public. This requires an effective data management policy that contains the principles of data collection, storage, classification, availability, retrieval, indexing, archiving, and measuring the impact of their use.

4. Proactive disclosure

Proactive disclosure is to provide data and government information on the initiative of the government body, without it being accessible in response to a specific request by one or more interested parties. Proactive disclosure allows in no small extent for greater transparency and accountability as it puts the government under the constant watch of the public, allowing it to keep tabs on the government spending and understand the backgrounds of decision-making or policy-making, and ensure access to the appropriate services it needs. Proactive disclosure also allows for more equitable availability of information, reduces time, effort and cost, and encourages the reuse of information as an economic, social and environment resource to generate added values.

5. Interpreting feedback

With the increased volume of feedback from citizens involved in open government initiatives and programmes, it is necessary to question the meaning of this information, the content that can be derived from it, and how to ensure its validity, objectivity, significance and relevance for beneficiaries. All of this require a two-way action: the validity of the individual data, and the meaning of the aggregated or composite data. It is difficult to set precise criteria to complete this work because feedback is often influenced by user motivation, social composition, and educational level. It is also necessary to monitor the users' behaviour in terms of their interests in searching or browsing portals and carry out statistical operations because that is indicative of the topics that concern them in the government's work.

6. Changing institutional infrastructures

As the number of open government initiatives increase and expand over time, the complexity of managing all of those initiatives and tracking their implementation becomes significantly complicated, which could become a major hindrance to sustain the success open government implementation. Government departments must, therefore, examine the development of institutional infrastructures in order to streamline procedures and integrate tools and processes of the open government to the extent possible and identify the new tasks and responsibilities arising therefrom. Entrusting one of the senior managers to oversee the open government programmes at the concerned authority and granting him/her broad competencies may be one of the key factors to the success of the implementation of the programmes.

In addition to the work within each government department, it is also necessary to coordinate collaboration among different government departments. Establishing a competent central institution (higher council or senior steering committee) authorised the task of overseeing the open government initiatives and coordinating between relevant government departments is instrumental in the successful implementation of the open government.

7. Changing the prevailing organizational and community culture

Clear plans and programmes must be devised to raise awareness, motivate government officials towards changing their culture and behaviour and push them to work harder to engage the citizens in public affairs. The incentive system includes material aspects, such as financial rewards or career promotion, when a notable success is achieved, and moral aspects such as praise or the announcement of the success of an open government initiative and the promotion of its results leading to greater transparency, participation and collaboration. It would be useful to add awareness, a culture of citizenship and some open government concepts in the curricula of the educational process.

The main concerns that government staff may have in transitioning to an open government is the emergence of any errors in the published data or the work procedures and decision-making; misinterpretation or misuse of the disseminated information; increased daily workloads, particularly administrative ones;

increased cost and delays in the implementation of the agenda. It is, therefore, necessary to clearly identify such concerns and develop a plan, if any, to address them.

8. *Work environment*

Public engagement in public affairs (mainly by using social media) is new not only for government employees but also for the citizens. Therefore, both government employees and citizens will inevitably go through a steep learning curve as open government initiatives progress. The Government might initially consider working with selected groups of citizens who enjoy the necessary awareness or have some advanced skills or with a number of civil society organisations/NGOs or professional associations representing citizens, in order to launch some open government initiatives and ensure their success before circulating them to the public.

9. *Funding and resource allocation*

Although the use of ICT is steadily increasing and many technological tools used in the implementation of open government initiatives are free of charge or low-cost, some activities, such as citizen engagement initiatives, might require substantial investments of funds concerning human resources, infrastructure and time. Thus, the capacity of the institution and the adequacy of the technological infrastructure in government departments is a prerequisite for the success of such programmes. Consequently, it is necessary to assess the adequacy and readiness of the IT infrastructure of the government administration and ensure its readiness to withstand social media applications, expressive and cooperative, particularly regarding bandwidth data transfer, and updating it when necessary.

10. *Emphasize inclusiveness*

In defining open government initiatives and programmes, it is crucial to incorporate issues associated with inclusiveness, i.e. ensuring these initiatives and programmes are inclusive of all categories of citizens. For example, it is vital to ensure that marginalized, low-income or special needs citizens have their needs taken into account and their feedback receives due attention, so that the upper and middle classes are not the primary beneficiaries of the outcomes of transparency and openness, especially that the lower income strata suffer more from government corruption, and often have a sense of fear of lodging complaints. Upon achieving inclusiveness, the adequacy and affordability of telecommunications infrastructure should be guaranteed, as broadening the reach of inclusiveness is based on expanding the use of mobile phones, the Internet and other multilateral means of communication to promote direct participation of citizens, interaction and respond to them, particularly in expanding public services, deliberations and decision-making.

11. *Open government at the local level*

There is a significant trend in most countries towards promoting and developing local decentralization (leading to the presence of local governments at times), and this trend also applies to open government. The adoption of open government concepts and mechanisms to promote transparency, accountability, participation and inclusiveness at local level results in an immediate improvement in the life of citizens, given that the citizen lives his daily life in and mostly interacts with his community (city, hometown, etc.) and many central public services are managed at the local level. Most of the recommendations of this part apply at the local level as they apply at the national level.

12. *Measurement and evaluation*

Government departments must adopt clear metrics for evaluating open government and citizen engagement performance, either by tracking the process or by evaluating the outcome and impact. Government departments are advised to adopt quantity centric metrics to evaluate performance (e.g. number of published data sets, number of comments by citizens) in the early phases, before shifting in the subsequent phases to

measure impact and outcomes (such as saving time and expenses and the increasing level of innovation) in addition to measuring intangible outcomes (such as strategic impact and citizen and government employee satisfaction). Government departments are advised to issue periodic monitoring and evaluation reports, which focus on achieved outcomes and disseminate these reports as widely as possible.

13. Usage policies

With the proliferation of open government activities and increased participation and openness, attention must be paid to privacy issues linked to the risks of disclosing confidential information, such as personal information and information security issues related to piracy, espionage and infiltration. It is, therefore, necessary for the Government to develop clear policies for the use of social media tools and applications in open government, adopt guidelines for identifying and addressing problems, resolving disputes and removing obstacles that government departments could face, such as the compatibility of conditions under which open government services are provided with agreements to use social networking sites, allow the use of cookies, adhere to privacy rules, intellectual property and others.

14. Open government legislation

There is a legislative aspect of open government that must not be neglected. The Government should initially examine the “e-legislation” in force (legislation on information technology and communications, media, freedom of expression, electronic transactions, private data processing, information security, cybercrime, intellectual property rights, and others) to ensure its adequacy to regulate the application of open government and modify it when needed. The existence of special legislation on access to information and proactive dissemination are of the most important fundamental legislations of open government, and therefore it is necessary to expedite the promulgation of such legislation where it is lacking and broaden the scope of openness provided for to the fullest extent possible.

15. Regional co-operation

There are experiences in open government with other government departments or in other countries that can be studied and built upon. In particular, it is worth knowing the stated objectives and guidelines, the mechanisms for providing the necessary resources, the web-stated solutions for data dissemination, the collection of feedback, the use of participatory and collaborative tools, and the launching of dialogue with other government departments and users to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.

It is important to coordinate past activities under a regional cooperation programme, aiming to share success stories, reach agreement on the basic principles and concepts of open government and develop a common framework and regional standards to evaluate performance.

This study is part of ESCWA’s efforts to launch this regional cooperation to reach a unified framework for open government policies in the Arab countries and enhance transparency and accountability in the public sector.

Finally, we summarise here some of the most important factors for the success of the implementation of open government.⁶⁰

(a) Emphasize that open government (like e-government) is a continuous programme at the heart of government business and not just a limited-term project;

(b) Emphasize the commitment and supportive political will for the open government programme, at the highest possible level;

(c) Issue a policy document in which the Government outlines the framework for open government at the national level and shows its vision in this regard and the principles underlying its application, which guide decision-making. This document is a commitment or charter of the Government, under which it undertakes the implementation of the open government, sustain it and consider it as an integrated component of its public policies;

(d) Promulgate or continue to pass the necessary legislation to ensure the application of open government, with the need to ensure complementarity with national policies and action plans for the open government;

(e) Develop detailed action plans at national and government departments levels to implement open government, according to the approved phases, so that they are realistic with clear and measurable outputs. The open government plan is the national action plan adopted to achieve transparency, accountability and inclusiveness;

(f) Ensure the involvement of government officials and all categories of citizens in all processes of designing, implementing and evaluating open government activities and services.

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37. An open format is one of the file formats for storing digital data defined in line with the specifications often stated by a standards organisation. Anyone can use and implement the open formats without charging any fees or costs. In contrast, a closed format is usually subject to trade secrecy with undisclosed specifications. In the following link is a list of the most important open formats in various fields: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_open_formats.
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